

# Don't Be Deceived!

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[ 0 : 00 ] To know that there are deceivers out there. The people of Gibeon came with the intent to lie and to deceive the people of Israel. There's no two ways about it. And just so you know, people will still attempt to lie and deceive the people of God and weasel their way into the church of God, the same way that the Gibeonites tried to weasel their way into the community of Israel to keep their land.

They were interested in self-preservation. They were interested in protecting their land and protecting their livelihood and protecting their families. The text here in the Christian Standard Bible says that they acted deceptively, but the word here is craftily.

They crafted a careful, intricate, detailed plan to sneak in and make a deal for their own safety.

People try to craftily come into the church in the same way.

In 2 Timothy chapter 3, Paul warns Timothy to be on guard for these people. And he says in the later days, these people are going to come in greater numbers. And we see it all the time.

There are pastors who have no business being pastors with the so-called truth that they're teaching. There are church members who perpetuate gossip and root division throughout the body of Christ with the sole goal of doing just that.

[ 1 : 16 ] We have to be careful to watch for the deceivers who will try to sneak in to the community of God. But there are some tactics that people tend to follow when they are attempting to deceive.

So some tactics of deception. One, they develop believable lies. So the people of Gibeon had developed a believable story. You know, when you look at it, it passed the eye test. They came up with this ruse.

They would dress up in these, you know, old, raggedy, worn-out clothes. It would make it look like they had traveled from a really far away place. You know, in modern times, this is what you would do. You would get in someone's car who is like a thousand miles past the oil change.

And then you'd show up and say, see, look, we need an oil change. You know what I mean? Like, we really came from a far away place. Look at the miles on this car. But they came. They put together this ruse. They dressed up.

They even dressed up their animals. They took these dry, crumbly loaves of bread. You know how bread, when it dries out, it becomes hard and crumbly. It falls apart. This is what they brought with them so that it looked like their story was valid.

[ 2 : 24 ] The second thing that they do is they come in with flattery. They come in with flattery. They don't just come in telling lies because, look at this, the people of Israel pushed back on their lies.

They replied to the Hivites, which, by the way, the Hivites were a people group. Evidently, that people group is who lived in Gibeon. So the Gibeonites and the Hivites, synonymous. Okay?

Anyways, perhaps you live among us.

How can we make a treaty with you? They said to Joshua, we are your servants. Then Joshua asked, who are you and where do you come from? So they turned from their story to flattery. We're your servants.

You know, it's not just that we came from a faraway place. We came to serve you. And it goes even further in verse 8 through 10. Sorry, 9 and 10. It says, they replied to him, your servants have come from a faraway land because of the reputation 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 Amorite kings beyond the Jordan. King Sihon of Heshbon and King Og of Bashan, who was in Ashtaroth.

[ 3 : 27 ] They knew the right things to say. This sounds a lot like, sounds very similar to what Rahab said to the spies when they came into the land in Joshua chapter 2.

Joshua 2.10 says, For we have heard about how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt. And what you did to Sihon and Og, the two Amorite kings, you completely destroyed across the Jordan.

And when we heard this, we lost heart and everyone's courage failed because of you. For the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on earth below.

I want you to notice a difference between what Rahab said and what the people of Gibeon said. Rahab's confession of this, of the fame of the Lord, ended with a confession of faith in the Lord. You are, your God is the God, the one and only God, the Lord of heaven and earth. The people of Gibeon weren't there to worship God. They were there to deceive. They came in with this flattery. [ 4 : 26 ] They knew the things to say. Of course they would know about what happened in Egypt. You know, that was worldwide news. That was a big deal. Of course they would know what happened with these Amorite kings. King Sihon and Og.

Goodness. King Sihon and Og. These were big acts, massive events. In fact, if you look back at Deuteronomy, when the people of Israel were going to fight against Sihon and Og, the Lord told Moses today, I will use this to strike fear into the people who hear of your name everywhere under heaven.

They'll hear of the people of Israel and they will tremble. So that was a big event. And it really did scare people. But notice, they conveniently left out what actually sparked their interest in striking this deal.

If you look back here at verse 3, it says, When the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done to Jericho and Ai, they acted deceptively. They gathered provisions and so on and so forth. They came in to deceive. And so they couldn't, you know, make it look like they were really close to the people of Israel in the land. They had to make it look that lie that they were from a faraway place that had to be a believable lie.

[ 5 : 38 ] And so they pointed to events that, you know, they definitely would have heard about because they had happened so long ago. And they conveniently left out the recent act that God had just done.

But the third thing that people do when they're attempting to deceive is they show good evidence. Look at what happens here in verse 11 through 13. Our elders and all the inhabitants of our land told us, Take provisions with you for the journey.

Go and meet them and say, We are your servants. Please make a treaty with us. This bread of ours was warm when we took it from our houses as food on the day we left to come to you. But see, it is now dry and crumbly.

These wineskins were new when we filled them. But see, they are cracked. And these clothes and sandals of ours are extremely worn out from the extremely long journey. And I'm going to read the beginning of verse 14.

Then the men of Israel took some of their provisions. And I want to pause there because the people of Gibeon were giving evidence to validate their lies.

[ 6 : 39 ] You know, and the evidence that they gave passed the eye test. In fact, it passed the feeling test. It passed the smell test. The people of Israel investigated, it seems like, fairly thoroughly.

They were hesitant to believe the people of Gibeon. They took some of the provisions. They felt the bread with their hands. They saw how crumbly it was. They saw, of course, the clothes that they were wearing. They were fairly careful in their investigation.

But Davis says that it wasn't an issue about being sloppy in their investigation. It was about being alone in their decision. Because look at what happens here at verses 14 and 15.

They did not seek the Lord's decision. They tasted. They felt. They investigated. But they did not seek the Lord's decision.

So Joshua established peace with them and made a treaty to let them live. And the leaders of the community swore an oath to them. You see the danger in trusting in your own wisdom?

[ 7 : 42 ] We're capable. We're susceptible. We can fall victim to tactics of deceit. And notice, too, God didn't intervene.

God didn't stop the people of Israel from making that covenant. He let them make that covenant with the people of Gibeon. And in doing so, showed them, again, the reliance they need to place on their relationship with him.

Joshua was supposed to go to Eliezer, the priest, and have him consult God before he made decisions like this. Joshua didn't do that. They did not seek the Lord's wisdom.

When we act in our own wisdom, when we decide in our own strength, when we trust our own senses, instead of trusting the wisdom of the Lord, we are capable of making very poor decisions. We could be deceived. So we have to spend time seeking God through his word before we make our decisions. This principle is not only true when it comes to international peace treaties, though I think it is true for that still today.

[ 8 : 54 ] This decision, this principle is true in every aspect of life. Now, here's the thing. There is no issue in making some decisions with a quick counsel of God's word.

Okay? So, for example, you do not need to fast and pray before you decide not to break the law. Right? It's good wisdom. It's basic.

Right? It's inherent to the truth of God's word that we follow the law that is over us. Kids, you don't have to seek the Lord's wisdom before you listen to your parents.

You know from God's word that you should listen to your parents. But when it comes to decisions where there's plenty of options and it can be really hard to choose, but your goal is to glorify God in your decision, there is this principle of seeking the Lord and making a wise choice based on what he shows you, both through his word, through your time of prayer, through the Holy Spirit within you, through the fellowship of the saints.

So, like, what kind of, what college will I attend? When should I start a family? Should I marry this person that I'm dating? When should I retire? These are questions that I think we would be wise to seek the Lord's counsel before making a decision.

[ 10 : 06 ] Proverbs 3, 5 through 7 says, Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not rely on your own understanding. In all your ways know him and he will make your path straight. Don't be wise in your own eyes.

Fear the Lord and turn away from evil. The people of Israel, in this case, relied on their own understanding. And friends, we are guilty of doing the same thing, aren't we?

Relying on our own understanding instead of seeking the counsel, the wisdom of the Lord through his word. Here's the thing. Sometimes we lack wisdom because we haven't asked for it.

Did you know that? Sometimes we don't make the wise decision because we haven't asked for wisdom in the decision-making process. If you look at James 1, verse 5, it says, Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given to him.

We have not because we ask not. There's a beautiful truth here that the Lord's wisdom, the Lord's counsel is available to us if we seek him and ask him to show us.

[ 11 : 18 ] And you're like, well, how in the world am I going to read this Bible that was written 2,000 plus years ago by all these different authors with these different specific contexts? How am I going to read this and know where I should go to college?

That's a good question. I mean, because it doesn't say go to Vanderbilt, not UT. Right? It doesn't say that in here. You know what I'm saying? But what we do have are principles to live by, truths that undergird the life of the believer, and wisdom for how we should live our lives.

Right? Where can I go to college that will most honor and glorify God? Well, are you called to be a light in a dark place? Well, maybe consider going, you know, to a dark place so that you can be a light that shows the truth and the love of God in the middle of some darkness.

Do you need to go to a place where you need to be spiritually formed and build up? Well, go to a place with maybe a Christian college where you're going to go to chapel and you're going to be in Bible classes. Right? These types of things we can take away from God's word as we seek him and pray for wisdom to understand and to serve.

The Lord God is willing to give us wisdom, but we have to ask him. We have to consult him. Finally, and ultimately, we have to submit to his counsel.

[ 12 : 31 ] That's another thing. Sometimes we know the wise decision, but we don't want to listen. We don't want to act the way that God would have us act. So we have to be careful.

Trust the Lord, seek his wisdom, and submit to his authority. Now, the second danger that I want to point out is how we should act when we find ourselves in the wrong. How should we find ourselves when we find, how should we respond when we find ourselves in a bad situation that we've put ourselves in?

We've got to be careful to not let sin snowball. And what I mean by that is when a snowball rolls, you know, it picks up more snow and gets bigger and bigger and bigger until you make a snowman or it rolls down a hill and hurts someone.

Don't let sin snowball. Verse 16 says, Three days after making the treaty with them, they heard that the Gibeonites were their neighbors living among them. So the Israelites set out and reached the Gibeonite cities on the third day.

Now their cities were Gibeon, Jephro, Beroth, and Kirath-Jerim. The people of Israel realized very quickly that they were in the wrong. They realized very quickly that they made a decision without seeking the Lord's counsel.

[13:42] So how would they respond? Look at verse 18. But the Israelites did not attack them because the leaders of the community had sworn an oath to them by the Lord, the God of Israel, and the whole community grumbled against the leaders.

How do we respond when we realize that we are in the wrong situation because of our own foolish behavior? Well, we have to address the problem directly and be held accountable.

There was no hiding the fact that the leadership of Israel made a mistake. There was no hiding that. And the people of Israel were scared because they just saw, they just witnessed how seriously God takes sin and defiance.

They took part in punishing Achan for his sin. They were scared and they were led into sin by their leadership. I would be pretty mad too.

And I'll point this out, by the way. Christian leaders, leaders in the church, have a responsibility to seek the wisdom of the Lord, the counsel of the Lord for the decisions regarding the leadership of the people of God because when the leadership goes sinfully somewhere, the people come with him.

[14:54] That's a high standard. That is a lot of responsibility. But what is the right response when we find ourselves in the wrong situation, in even a sinful situation?

The answer would be accountability. Accountability. They had to take accountability for their actions, and they had to repent and turn back to the word of the Lord. But there's a temptation sometimes to push off accountability.

When we're in a sinful situation, instead of taking accountability and being responsible for what you've done, there's that temptation sometimes, that pressure to avoid it. Pressure, in this case, came from the people of Israel.

They were mad. They wanted to go and fight the Gibeonites. So they had this pressure, this social pressure sometimes, to hide their sin and go, like, hey, maybe God didn't hear us on that covenant, right? Like, maybe we can go and fight them and that'll be fine.

But the people of Israel were resolute. They wouldn't do that. We have to be careful. Whenever we fall into sin, because of our own sinful, you know, decisions, we should not continue in sin to try to cover it up.

[16:00] David is a perfect example of this in 2 Samuel. David looked at Bathsheba. He lusted. He committed adultery with her. And instead of facing that responsibly, he brought in her husband and tried to cover it up.

When he was too noble, he sent him out to the battlefield to die. He murdered him, right? The sin had snowballed so greatly. I have a friend who, back whenever he was in high school, this is before I even knew him, he got a girl pregnant out of wedlock.

It was his girlfriend. It was a dramatic thing. And the decision that they made was to terminate the pregnancy. And now he's a Christ follower, a father of two sons.

He works in the church. And I cannot express to you how greatly he regrets that decision.

Committing more sin to cover up acts of sin is not the answer.

Accountability. Falling on our face and repenting before the Lord and seeking his wisdom on how we should live in the bad situation we've made for ourselves.

[17:08] That is the way forward. All the leaders answered them, we have sworn an oath to them by the Lord, the God of Israel, and now we cannot touch them. This is how we will treat them.

We will let them live so that no wrath will fall on us because of the oath we swore to them. They also said, let them live. So the people agreed. They understood. The leadership is leading wisely.

They agreed. Let them live. So the Gibeonites became woodcutters and water carriers for the whole community as the leaders had promised them. So how do we navigate life after sin?

Number one, realize your sin. Two, stop living in sin. And number three, return to the word of the Lord. The people of Israel had a commitment to the word of the Lord and to honor his name. They wouldn't break that oath because it would dishonor the name of God and would bring doom on themselves, wrath on themselves. In fact, later in 2 Samuel 21, verses 1 through 9, I don't have time to pull it up in here, but you can look at it if you want to.

[18:11] 2 Samuel 21, 1 through 9, when King David, when he was king in Israel, there was a famine in the land for three years. So he sought the Lord and asked why this famine was taking place.

Well, the Lord responded. It was because King Saul, because of his zeal for Judah and Israel, had sought to exterminate the Gibeonites. When Saul was the leader of the people of Israel, he led the people to break this covenant.

And God's wrath poured out in the form of a famine. And so David went to the people of Gibeon and said, how can we fix this? And they fixed it. But what you see in that scene is what could have happened if the people of Israel had gone back on their word, the oath they made in the Lord's name, and fought against the people of Gibeon instead of trying to navigate how to best live in this situation.

In wisdom, they were held accountable. They returned to the word of the Lord, and they didn't let their sin snowball into even greater sin. We ought to respond to sinful circumstances in our life the same way.

Trust the word of the Lord. Return to the word of the Lord. Repent of sin and stop living in it. And seek how you can best live out your faith in this sinful circumstance.

[19:32] But I want to show you also the wisdom and the mercy and the grace of God in this whole scene. The way that God graciously handled sin.

I want you to see two things. One, the wisdom of Israel. And two, the response of Gibeon. So verse 22, So we saw in verse 21 that they would be woodcutters and water carriers for the whole community.

But now we see in verse 23 that they would be woodcutters and water carriers for the house of the Lord. This is for the temple. All right, so wherever the temple got built, the Gibeonites would have to live close so that they could be woodcutters and water carriers, slaves for the temple.

And here's the thing. Do you remember what the risk of letting the inhabitants of the land remain, what the risk was for the people of Israel?

God made it really clear for them. Deuteronomy, well, many times, but Deuteronomy 20, 17 through 18, God says they must destroy completely these people so that they won't teach you to do all the detestable acts they do for their gods and you sin against the Lord your God.

[20:53] Remember the fear was if there are pagans in the land, the people of Israel would be drawn into that pagan idol worship. And so as a way of safeguarding the people of Israel, where did they place the Gibeonites?

In the temple, where they had to hear the word of the Lord taught. They had to be witness to the sacrifices to the Lord.

They had to be witness to the work of God, the word of God. So as a way to safeguard the people of Israel, Joshua and the leaders presumably went to the Lord and sought his direction and came with this decision to place these pagan individuals, pagan idol worshipers, as close to the word of the Lord as they could possibly get so that instead of the pagan idol worship rubbing off on the people of Israel, the worship of the true God would actually rub off on the people of Gibeon.

And you see the Gibeonites later throughout the Old Testament are a fairly influential group of people. They helped rebuild the wall with Nehemiah. One of David's mighty men was a Gibeonite. There's a prophet even from Gibeon. The people of Gibeon were useful in useful service to the Lord and were in close proximity to the word of God. They didn't become a stumbling block, as far as we know from the biblical record, for the people of Israel.

[22:15] It's an amazingly wise response. But also I want you to see the response of the Gibeonites. Israel responded the right way, but the people of Gibeon responded the right way as well. Verse 24, The Gibeonites answered him, It was clearly communicated to your servants 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 before you.

We greatly feared for our lives because of you, and this is why we did this. Now we are in your hands. Do to us whatever you think is right. This is what Joshua did to them. He rescued them from the hands of the Israelites and did not kill them. And on that day he made them woodcutters and water carriers as they are today for the community and for the Lord's altar at the place he would choose.

You see the humility in their response? We are your servants. When they came initially trying to flatter the people of Israel with this, We're your servants. We're here from a long way away. Now they mean sincerely, We are your servants.

You've struck the deal with us. We told you we would be. Do with us whatever you see fit. They responded the right way. They didn't oppose the punishment. They didn't live outside of the consequence of their sin.

[ 23 : 23 ] They lived within it. But this merciful plea, They didn't even know that they were seeking the mercy of the Lord, and yet they saw it because of the way that God was able to use this to teach them his word and his ways.

The Gibeonites, they came to the Israelites under false pretense, but the Lord was not deceived. The Lord was not tricked. And if Joshua had sought the Lord, they would have known that.

But since he didn't, what you see is that even in those sinful decisions of the Gibeonites to lie and the Israelites to trust their own strength and their own wisdom, God is still in control.

God is still sovereign and working all things together for the sake of redemption and mercy. He redeemed this situation. And I want you to understand, too, that God sees through our deception. We're not tricking God when we try to hide our sin. God is fully aware of the depths of our sin. He's also fully merciful and willing to forgive. He's offered his grace to us in the person of Jesus Christ.

[ 24 : 35 ] So there's three takeaways I want you to take from this passage, okay? Number one, seek God's wisdom. That is, have a proactive faith. The Israelites fell victim to a believable lie because they relied on their own understanding instead of God's.

Don't make the same mistake. When faced with a decision, trust God's counsel that you have through prayer and his word. Proactive faith.

Seek God before you act. And number two, respond with accountability when you find yourself in sin. Because we're human beings. We're capable of falling. We're capable of making the same mistake that Joshua and the people did.

And not rightly seeking the Lord. And even when we try to seek the Lord, we're still capable of making human mistake, human error. But when we find ourselves in sin, respond with accountability, not more sin.

Jesus is the perfect one who's never sinned. And he offers us grace and counsel as we navigate life after sin. When we make a foolish decision, we're tempted to double down so that we can avoid shame.

[ 25 : 46 ] But the Israelite leaders model the right response. Correct the sin. Right? Repent. Turn from the sin. And turn to the grace of the Lord and seek his wisdom.

Continuing in sin is never the right way to fix a wrong situation. And number three, trust God's grace. Again, the Gibeonites were deceptive.

They were liars. And the people of Israel, who were his covenant people and knew the right way to act, the right way to seek the Lord, chose not to and ended up in a sinful situation. But through this, God provided a path for redemption.

Our sin has consequences, but God's grace is sufficient to work within them. He can redeem even the worst of our mistakes, even the worst deception, the worst lie. He can redeem it all.

This is the promise of redemptive faith, knowing that God, even in our brokenness, he is faithful to his promises and he can restore us. So today we're going to close.

[ 26 : 51 ] We're going to sing a song. We're going to stand together. But I want you to consider the way that you see this play out in this scene. The way that you see the people of Israel avoid, you know, seeking the Lord's counsel and trusting in their own wisdom.

Is there sin in your life from trusting in your own wisdom that you need to repent of and turn from today? Do you need to face the sin in your life the same way the leadership of Israel did?

Be held accountable to your sin? You know, human beings can hold you accountable, but the real accountability comes from studying God's word. Examine your heart in light of the scripture.

God's word is a mirror, and when we look through it and see ourselves, God reveals to us the sinfulness, the brokenness that remains in these earthly vessels. So do you have sin that you need to repent of today?

And then finally, have you trusted the mercy and the grace of God? It's available to you. The people of Gibeon, they didn't believe that it was going to be available to them.

[ 27 : 58 ] We saw in the example of Rahab that it absolutely was. They didn't believe, they didn't trust that God or the people of God would be merciful. I want you to understand that Jesus' death and resurrection guarantees God's redemption that he offers to you.

So pray to receive Christ today. Let's pray together. Lord, as we look at this text today, it's just a reminder that we cannot rest in our own wisdom.

We cannot rest in our own strength, but only, oh God, in yours. Lord, I pray that you would guide our hearts, guide our lives. Let us live for you. And God, if there's sin in our hearts that we need to repent of and turn from, then God, make that clear to us.

As we sing even now, Holy Spirit, God, fill this room and speak to us. Show us in our hearts the depth of our sin. And if there's people in this room who have not repented, then God, I pray that you would convict their hearts and lead them to the place of mercy and forgiveness at your throne.

We love you, Lord Jesus, and pray this in your name. Amen.