

# Joshua Series #4

“Seeking Counsel” — Joshua 9:1-16

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. *War*

1. Most wars are comprised of many battles
2. Usually, some battles are won and others are lost
3. When I was a kid, really liked war movies
  - a. parents took me to see 2 W.W.II movies
  - b. “The Battle of the Bulge” - famous tank battle America lost
  - c. “The Longest Day” - Invasion of Normandy, America won
4. In war, some battles are won and some lost
5. And so it is in spiritual warfare as well
  - a. some of the spiritual battles we face we win
  - b. others we lose

### B. *Joshua*

1. As we’ve been seeing, the book of Joshua not only tells the story of Israel conquering the Promised Land . . .
2. It also presents a picture of the Victorious Christian Life
3. In Joshua we learn important lessons on how to walk in faith
4. But not all the battles Israel fought were won
5. There was one battle she lost before she ever began fighting
6. It’s of that battle we read today

### C. *Us*

1. Christian — remember this . . .
2. A battle won does not mean a victorious war
3. And on the other hand, a battle lost does not mean everything is hopeless
4. As long as we are in these bodies, as long as sin lasts, the conflict goes on
5. We must ever be vigilant lest the enemy catch us off guard

## II. TEXT

### A. *Vs. 1-2*

1 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,

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

1. They had taken both Jericho & Ai
2. Other kings heard about it
  - a. realized they would all fall like them if they didn't unite
  - b. so they made an agreement to fight against Israel together
  - c. these kings, who usually fought each other, saw a bigger threat in Israel
  - d. so they dropped whatever differences they may have had for the greater cause of resisting the people of God
3. Understand this Christian — there is nothing more important on the devil's agenda than to try to stop your advance in spiritual things
  - a. every step forward in spiritual growth is a major threat to his kingdom
  - b. in Joshua 5:1 we read these words about these kings of Canaan —
  - c. Josh 5:1 So it was, when all the kings of the Amorites who were on the west side of the Jordan, and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea, heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of the Jordan from before the children of Israel until we had crossed over, that their heart melted; and there was no spirit in them any longer because of the children of Israel.
  - d. many Christians get freaked out by demons
    - get scared
    - “Change the subject”
  - e. even talk about spiritual warfare and how to be victorious bothers them because they are reminded about the reality of the enemy
  - f. they are uncomfortable with the idea that there are evil spirits that would like to do them harm
  - g. listen — like these kings whose hearts melted in them for fear of Israel . . .
  - h. demons tremble before the believer who knows what he or she is about!
  - i. nothing is more fearful to a demon than a Spirit filled Christian except Jesus Christ Himself
  - j. and the reason why, is because just like Israel, God gives us the victory over all the power of the enemy
  - k. in Col 2, we are told that Jesus disarmed the devil and his minions at the cross
4. Yes, the Canaanites were worried about Israel, so they united against her

5. All, that is, except one group . . .

**B. Vs. 3-13**

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

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

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

**6 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.”**

1. Israel was encamped at a place called Gilgal, just a short distance from the place where Jericho had stood
2. Gibeon was just a few miles due west of there
3. In other words, they were the next region to be conquered by Israel
4. Rather than unite with the other Canaanites to attack Israel,
5. The Gibeonites decided to trick Israel into a treaty
  - a. they had realized that to attempt defeat of the people of God in outright battle was a losing proposition
  - b. so they resorted to deception and tried to work for a false peace
6. Their idea was this:
  - a. they would try to make Joshua think that they were distant neighbors, not Canaanites
  - b. that they had traveled from a far country
    - they took old ragged clothes
    - worn out sandals, moldy bread, cracked wineskins
    - old, broken down donkeys
7. God had already given the command that Israel was not to make a treaty with any of the people of Canaan
  - a. instead, because of the utter corruption of the Canaanites,
  - b. it was God’s intention to use Israel as His righteous judgment

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

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

**9 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,

10 “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.

11 “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.”’

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

13 “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.”

8. The Gibeonites say that the reason they want to make a treaty with Israel is because they have heard of the greatness of Israel’s God
  - a. Yahweh’s reputation had reached this whole area
  - b. while the rest of the Canaanites thought to unite and attack Israel —
  - c. the Gibeonites thought it smarter to try another strategy; one of deception and compromise
9. In this, the Gibeonites perfectly picture the subtlety of Satan
  - a. Satan is much too devious in his plans to make the blunder of an outright attack on the watchful Christian
  - b. instead, he tries a more subtle attack
  - c. while Israel prepared itself for the assault of the united kings of Canaan
  - d. the Gibeonites snuck in unawares
  - e. they wangled Joshua into a treaty, they maneuvered him into a false peace
  - f. in like manner, the devil will often come at us in quiet and subtle ways
  - g. he’ll speak to us about a possible alliance that seems inconsequential to our walk with the Lord
  - h. he’ll suggest that there are certain areas of our lives that really have little or nothing to do with being a Christian
    - things like entertainment, rel. with our friends, our job
    - then he will set up camp in these little side areas
    - these areas we have compromised
    - and he will spread his deception and lies to other areas
    - till we have lost the passion and zeal to follow the Lord
10. Christian - beware the danger of compromise
11. Here we read that the enemies of Israel stood in the middle of her camp, and by pretense sought peace

12. Has the enemy snuck in to your life and called you to compromise?

**C. Vs. 14-16**

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

**15 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.**

**16 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.**

1. Joshua, that mighty man of faith, fell for the ruse of the Gibeonites
2. He, along with the elders of Israel listened to the story of the Gibeonites
  - a. they looked at the evidence
  - b. and satisfied that all was as it appeared,
  - c. they made a treaty with them
3. But only three short days later, they discovered the truth
4. Gibeon was just several miles west of them
5. Israel's mistake is found in v. 14,
  - a. "The men of Israel took some of their provisions;"
    - that is, they examined their clothes
    - they looked at the bread and wineskins
    - sure enough, it all looked like they had come from a distant land
  - b. "but they did not ask counsel of the LORD."
    - here is where Israel failed
    - she never inquired of the Lord
    - Joshua and the elders never stopped to pray about it
  - c. to them, it seemed obvious
  - d. so why bother God with something so clear?
6. The reason they should have gone to God with it is because this was no everyday event
  - a. a national treaty with another people was a big deal
  - b. but Israel made the all too common blunder of walking by sight rather than by faith
7. What a lesson for us there is in these things
8. These men, these leaders of Israel trusted their own natural understanding, based on what they observed.
9. Our reaction to that might be,
  - a. "What's wrong with that?"
  - b. After all, we live in a material world in which we operate by our

- senses.”
- c. if we didn't use our senses, and our good common sense, how could we live in this world?
10. Of course we must use our senses, our sight, hearing, touch
  11. But the mistake we make is by thinking that the senses are **enough** for all of life
    - a. that **all** there is to reality is the material realm
  12. There is more to reality than the natural, material universe
    - a. there is also the realm of the spirit,
    - b. and the spiritual realm exerts a tremendous influence on our lives
    - c. that is why our physical senses are not enough
    - d. we must look to the Spirit

#### **D. Seeking Counsel**

1. In Prov 3:5-6 we read, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.”
  - a. no one's understanding is sufficient to meet all the needs of life
    - from the greatest theologian or scientist
    - to the youngest child
    - no one understands all that is going on around them
  - b. only God possesses the knowledge and understanding to direct us
  - c. that is why the Proverbs says, “Lean not on your own understanding, but rather, trust in the LORD.”
  - d. and notice when we are to trust in Him: in all our ways
  - e. I like what Alan Redpath says about this . . .

Never, never, NEVER trust your own judgment in anything. When common sense says that a course is right, lift your heart to God, for the path of faith and the path of blessing may be in a direction completely opposite to that which you call common sense. When voices tell you that action is urgent, that something must be done immediately, refer everything to the tribunal of heaven. Then, if you are still in doubt, dare to stand still. If you are called on to act and you have not had time to pray, don't act. If you are called on to move in a certain direction and cannot wait until you have peace with God about it, don't move.

2. In just three days, Israel discovered that the Gibeonites were living in the very middle of the land
  - a. and when they found out, v. 18 says the people were furious with the elders and Joshua
  - b. those leaders, so sure of their decision 3 days before, were put to shame

3. Isa 49:23 says, “They shall not be ashamed who wait for Me.”
4. We need to be careful when we begin to think, “There is no need to consult the Lord on this matter—it’s quite clear.”
  - a. this is what Israel did, and it led to trouble
  - b. no, we must look to God’s guidance in every issue
  - c. of course, this doesn’t mean that we should **agonize** over every petty issue either
  - d. I once heard of a Christian group home in which the idea of being led by the Lord was so misunderstood that several of the men refused to get out of bed in the morning until they had “heard from the Lord.”
    - as a result, several of them wasted many days just lounging around
  - e. some years ago, my mother invited a lady to come live with her
    - she had bounced around to several homes in my mother’s church
    - after a few weeks in each home, she was asked to leave
    - she would always find someone else to live with
    - she appeared to be a very strong Christian at church
    - but outside of church, she was nothing more than a mooch
    - under the guise of being “totally led of the Lord” she refused to do anything at all unless she heard an audible voice from heaven
    - so she spent almost every day in bed, or watching TV
    - she told my mother she was being used of the Lord to teach other people the lesson of patience and generosity
  - f. we are called to lean on the everlasting arms of God, not collapse in them
  - g. there is a danger of over-spiritualizing the leading of the Lord
  - h. yes, we must seek the counsel of God in all things
  - i. but let’s face it, He has already given His counsel for the vast majority of decisions we make
  - j. that counsel is found right here [the bible]
  - k. His counsel today will never contradict His counsel in Scripture
5. God delights to give us guidance and direction
  - a. 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.”
  - b. In Eph 6:18 we read that we are to “Pray always.”
6. Ultimately, there are only two sources of counsel; God & Man
  - a. where we go for guidance and direction determines where we will

- end up
  - b. if we trust in our own counsel, we will fail
  - c. if we trust in the counsel of other men or women, we will be led astray
  - d. but if we get our counsel from God, we will be safe
7. I am gravely concerned as I look at the body of Christ today
- a. it seems that rather than seeking the counsel of God,
  - b. Christians are trusting in the counsel of man
    - whether it is for direction for their homes and families
    - or their jobs
    - they are turning to the so-called experts
  - c. there is a verse that has been haunting me lately as I see so many Christians turn from seeking the Lord to trusting in the bankrupt wisdom of this world
  - d. in Jer 2 God laments the waywardness of His people Israel in that they have turned from Him to that which cannot help.
  - e. in vs. 11-13 He mourns “Has a nation changed its gods, which are not gods? But My people have changed their Glory for what does not profit. Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid; Be very desolate, says the LORD. For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns; broken cisterns that can hold no water.”
  - f. why are we turning to the broken, dried up wells of this world’s wisdom when God stands so ready to give us counsel?
  - g. Col 2:3 says “In [**Christ**] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”
    - they are not in Carl Jung, Sigmund Freud, Rodgers, Maslow
    - they are not in Anthony Robbins
    - they are not in Werner Erhardt
    - they are not in Shirley MacLaine, or L. Ron Hubbard
    - they are in Christ!
8. Who do you go to counsel for?

### III. CONCLUSION

#### A. Referrals

1. I have been asked for referrals to counseling at several points over the years
2. Today, if you ask me for a referral for some good counseling, here’s where I’ll send you . . .

**Job 12:13** “With God are wisdom and strength, He has counsel and understanding.”

**Psa 33:11** The counsel of the LORD stands forever, The plans of His heart to all generations.

**Psa 73:24** You will guide me [O Lord] with Your counsel, And afterward receive me to glory.

**Prov 19:21** There are many plans in a man’s heart, Nevertheless the Lord’s counsel; that will stand.

**Isa 9:6** “Unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor.”

**Isa 28:29** The LORD of hosts is wonderful in counsel and excellent in guidance.

**Isa 30:1** “Woe to the rebellious children,” says the LORD, “Who take counsel, but not of Me, And who devise plans, but not of My Spirit, That they may add sin to sin.