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Joshua 9:18-27
“7 Don’ts Moving Forward”
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Discussion Questions:

1. Have you ever been fooled or lied to? How did you feel? Did it make you want to quit or walk away? How do you think Joshua didn’t allow his feelings to impact the earlier covenant?
2. What is one thing challenging about being a leader? How does a relationship with God help us lead in those areas?
3. Can you think of people who allowed mistakes to limit them or their mistakes helped them move you forward? What do you think makes the difference?
4. What ways do people choose popularity over integrity? Why?
5. What is something you have learned about how God can help people move forward after mistakes?

Teaching Notes:

Joshua and the Jews were tricked into believing the Gibeonites...
...were from far away w/old clothes, moldy bread, worn out shoes.

What they **saw** led them to believe what they were **hearing**...
...**but** what they **didn’t** do was **seek the Lord**.

They made peace when they should have fought.
They agreed to a covenant when they should have conquered.

They had been lied to, duped, and deceived...
...And that never feels good.

But we also saw the Gibeonites had reason for lying...
...mostly they were afraid to die...they wanted to live.
They were willing to serve and they wanted a covenant.

Big Idea: Mistakes can stop or slow us, but God wants us to move forward.

Title: Five Don’ts in Moving Forward

The Jews come to the 4 Gibeonite cities...

18 But the children of Israel did not attack them, because the rulers of the congregation had sworn to them by the Lord God of Israel. And all the congregation complained against the rulers.

This is our first instance of division in Joshua.

The people are complaining about their leaders.

This was an old issue for the Jews...they complained all the time.

But up until now, it hasn't been an issue.

There are times when the drama, the division, or the difficulty...

...isn't a spiritual or personal attack..

...it is our own failure.

People make mistakes and leaders are people...

...and leaders make mistakes too.

But when a leader makes a mistake, it usually has a higher cost because it has a greater impact.

When the CEO makes a mistake it costs him and shareholders.

When a parent makes a mistake it costs them and their kids.

When a coach makes a mistake, it costs him/her and the team.

Maybe that's why...

Paul says there is a greater judgment for teachers.

Or not to lay hands on anyone suddenly.

People should be proven before they lead.

But even God-chosen, time-tested, situationally proven leaders...

...make mistakes

1. Don't judge too harshly.

Give people some grace...especially your leaders.

It is easy to sit off to the side and judge decisions.

Teddy Roosevelt said something like -Criticizing work which the critic himself never tries to perform...is a mark of weakness.

Criticizing is easy, but leading is hard.

Complicated situations, high pressured circumstances...

...bigger impact and everyone watching...make it hard.

If you don't like the leader, or you can't follow the leader...
...then find another leader.

If they need to be called on the carpet or confronted...
...go and do it.

But don't tear them down or continue to complain or vilify them...
...treat them as you would want to be treated.

Ephesians 4:32

And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

**Think of your most public mistake or embarrassment...
...and remember they are human beings too.**

**So there was division, there was complaining, and...
...they brought it on by their own failure...
...But that didn't stop them from moving forward.**

19 Then all the rulers said to all the congregation, "We have sworn to them by the Lord God of Israel; now therefore, we may not touch them.

2. Don't live in the shadow of past mistakes.

There was no use in crying over spilled milk.

There was no use in mourning their mistake anymore.

Just like at Ai, after mourning, God said, Get up and get going.

**We cannot allow past failures to limit our forward progress.
We must learn from it, but we can't live in it.**

- Stop rehashing those who have sinned against you.
- Stop rehearsing the mistakes you have made.
- Stop reminding yourself and others of those who wronged you.

**What is done is done, learn from it and...
...move forward and let others move forward too.**

And for the leaders...

The leaders made a mistake, but they needed to keep leading

Don't let one mistake define you.

Don't think you don't belong just because you aren't perfect.

Mistakes happen, and they can be what propel us forward.

They were not going to let their mistake define them...

...And they were not going to let one mistake lead to two.

3. Don't multiply mistakes.

When you try to move forward...

...don't keep going down the wrong road.

The leaders remind the people, like it or not...

...this is where we are, and this is what we must do.

...We made one serious mistake, we can't make another.

They had given them their word, they made a covenant...

...And they would keep it.

This was not a popular decision...

...But life and leadership is not about being popular.

As you try to move forward...

4. Don't focus on popularity.

The crowd wants the easy win, the emotional feeling...

...the quick solution.

But leaders need to see the big picture...

...We need to weigh the consequences...

...And ultimately we must obey God and His word.

A parent, a businessman, a shift manager or a team captain...

...must hold to their integrity not their popularity.

Integrity comes from the root word "integer"-**whole number**.

You need to make decisions that are whole, w/o divided motives.

They had messed up, but now...

...they needed to keep their word, popular or not.

Hundreds of years later... Saul was zealous for the house of Israel, but not for this commitment that they had made.

II Samuel 21 — God brought a 3 year famine because King Saul had not honored this covenant and killed Gibeonites

But, how can they move forward now?

Can they let these people off totally free?

20 This we will do to them: We will let them live, lest wrath be upon us because of the oath which we swore to them.” 21 And the rulers said to them, “Let them live, but let them be woodcutters and water carriers for all the congregation, as the rulers had promised them.”

22 Then Joshua called for them, and he spoke to them, saying, “Why have you deceived us, saying, ‘We *are* very far from you,’ when you dwell near us? 23 Now therefore, you *are* cursed, and none of you shall be freed from being slaves— woodcutters and water carriers for the house of my God.”

The Gibeonites had said 3 times they were willing servants.
And so Joshua makes them servants.

5. Don't scoff at serving.

Being a servant isn't a low place, it is a place to live.

Jesus said whoever would be great would be the servant of all.

If you want real life and significance...

...don't seek great things, more money or honor...

...just look for a place to serve.

Look for a need and meet it.

Look for an opportunity and take it.

Look for a person and bless them.

24 So they answered Joshua and said, “Because your servants were clearly told that the Lord your God commanded His servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land from before you; therefore we were very much afraid for our lives because of you, and have done this thing. 25 And now, here we are, in your hands; do with us as it seems good and right to do to us.”

6. Don't forget the power of humility.

These men were called out.

Joshua was upset with them.

They had lied and deceived.

...But they didn't fight back, they didn't make excuses.

They simply and humbly yielded themselves.

This is the posture that receives mercy from the Lord.

This is the place you will be honored from the Lord.

Don't fight back, don't stand up for yourself, just humbly yield.

...And let the Lord lift you up.

26 So he did to them, and delivered them out of the hand of the children of Israel, so that they did not kill them. **27** And that day Joshua made them woodcutters and water carriers for the congregation and for the altar of the Lord, in the place which He would choose, even to this day.

Moving forward...

7. Don't doubt God's redemptive power.

To redeem something means to buy it back, to return its value.

...They should have been dead, but instead...

...by God's mercy, they were alive.

But it didn't stop there.

Not only was Gibeon saved.

Not only did they survive...

...in their service they became significant.

God redeemed this city under judgment and...

... Gibeon became a city for priests.

God redeemed these deceptive people and...

...a prophet came from Gibeon.

God redeemed this forsaken place and...

...let His presence dwell there as the ark stayed at Gibeon often in the days of David and Solomon.

And even after Judah itself was under the judgment of God...

there were Gibeonites who returned with Nehemiah to rebuild the nation.

God takes pleasure in moving forward with unlikely people...

...and making something valuable and useful out of them.

He would say...

I will take your mess and give you a message.

I will take your ashes and give you beauty.

I will take your pain and give you power.

I will take your worst and give you my best.

When you belong to the Lord and surrender yourself to serve the Lord...He does a work no one would ever expect.