

Navigating Obstacles

Theme verse: "Good planning and hard work lead to prosperity, but hasty shortcuts lead to poverty." – Proverbs 21:5

Opening Connection: The Uncharted Island

Activity: Pair up and imagine you've been chosen as the *first humans* to explore a brand-new South Pacific island—one no one has ever stepped on. Discuss:

- What would you bring?
- How would you prepare?
- What obstacles might you face and how would you get past them?

Transition:

"Good explorers plan ahead because they expect the unexpected. Leaders are no different. Navigating obstacles means anticipating problems before they happen and preparing your response in advance. This is different from solving problems after they've already caused damage—it's being proactive instead of reactive. Today, we'll learn from Scripture how to avoid getting blindsided like Joshua did, and how to lead with wisdom so that our teams—and our own faith—don't stumble."

Main Points

1. Identify Possible Problems

- *Cultural Context:* Ancient leaders in battle, business, or politics thrived when they understood their enemies' tactics and weaknesses ahead of time.
- Joshua in Joshua 9 faced a crafty enemy—the Gibeonites—who knew they couldn't win by force, so they won by deception. Joshua never stopped to ask God before making a treaty.
- Leaders today face similar traps—not in warfare, but in relationships, projects, and moral decisions.

Ask:

- Why is it easier to prepare for some problems than others?
- When have you spotted a potential problem before it happened?

2. Identify Possible Solutions

- *Biblical Insight:* Proverbs 15:22 says, “*Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.*” Joshua had leaders around him, but he didn’t pause to seek their insight—or God’s.
- Brainstorming solutions before problems hit keeps you from making panicked, emotional choices in the moment.

Ask:

- Why do leaders sometimes skip this step and just “wing it”?
- What’s the risk of only having one possible solution to a problem?

3. Prepare Your Team

- *Leadership Reality:* People follow leaders they trust, and they trust leaders who are ready.
- Preparation isn’t always public—you don’t broadcast every “what if” scenario—but your core team should know you’re not just reacting on the fly.
- For Israel, Joshua’s agreement with the Gibeonites bound the whole nation. The cost of a leader’s unpreparedness often falls on the team.

Ask:

- How does a leader’s preparation affect the confidence of the team?
- Who in your life would you want “in the know” if a crisis hit?

Biblical Case Study: Joshua & the Gibeonites (Joshua 9)

Summary:

- Israel’s victories spread fear in the land.
- The Gibeonites disguised themselves to look like distant travelers.
- Joshua believed their story without asking God for guidance.
- The result? Israel was stuck in a covenant with people who lived right next door.

Lessons for Leaders:

1. Pressure can make leaders rush decisions.
2. Not seeking God's direction first can lead to lasting consequences.
3. Even after a mistake, integrity means honoring your word (Joshua still kept the covenant).

Life Application Challenge

"As young leaders, the obstacles you face might not be armies—they might be friendships that pull you the wrong way, time pressures that make you cut corners, or temptations to compromise your values. Learning to navigate obstacles now—before they show up—will set you apart as a leader who not only survives but thrives in every season."

Living It Out:

- Identify one area of your life where you keep “reacting” instead of “planning ahead.”
- List two possible challenges you could face in that area—and write down solutions before they happen.
- Share one of those plans with someone who can hold you accountable.

Closing Prayer:

Lead them in a prayer asking God for wisdom, patience, and foresight. Invite them to surrender their plans to Him and to listen for His direction before making decisions.