

The Gibeonite Trick

Scripture Reference: [Joshua 9:1-10:15](#)



Suggested Emphasis: We should ask God to help us make wise decisions.

Memory Verse: "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, Who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him." [James 1:5](#)



Background Study



Story Introduction



Telling the Story



Review Questions



Songs



Learning Activities



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Story Overview:

God was keeping His promise that the land would belong to His people. People in the land began to fear Israel because the Lord was helping them win all of their battles. The people in the town of Gibeon knew the army was close and were afraid that Israel would attack them, so they played a trick. They made themselves appear to have travelled a long way. They asked Joshua to make a treaty with them and promise to protect them. Joshua did not ask the Lord's advice but simply agreed to the treaty. When the Israelites later heard that the Gibeonites were neighbours, they knew they had been tricked. Even so, they knew they had to honour the treaty. When enemies attacked Gibeon, Joshua took his army and protected Gibeon. The battle lasted a long time because the Lord caused the sun to stand still. Joshua should have inquired of the Lord in the first place.

Background Study:

The Amorites lived in the hill country of the Promised Land and had a king over each major city and the area surrounding it. Israel had split the land into two sections and gained control of a large portion of central Canaan by conquering Jericho and Ai. What God had done for the Israelites made everyone in Canaan fearful. They had heard that God told Moses to conquer everyone in the land. So some joined forces to fight against Israel ([Joshua 9:1-2](#)). But the Gibeonites decided to trick Israel into making a treaty with them.

A Gibeonite delegation tried to make Israel think they had come on a journey from a far away place. In reality, Gibeon was probably not more than twenty miles away from the Israelite camp at Gilgal. The ruse was elaborate, even down to carrying dry, mouldy bread. And it worked.

The key factor, and a sad one, is found in [Joshua 9:14](#). The leaders looked at the evidence and trusted their own judgment—without asking the Lord what to do. The treaty the Gibeonites requested offered that they be servants of the Israelites ([9:11](#)). Perhaps they were aware of the Israelite law concerning peace treaties ([Deuteronomy 20:10-11](#)). They knew that Israel, with God’s help, could wipe them out, and they preferred slavery to death.

The result of Israel’s hasty decision was that they couldn’t fulfil God’s command concerning all the inhabitants of the land. When we fail to seek God’s guidance, we can end up making bad decisions, just as Israel did. But when we seek him and study his word, we can be thankful that he guides us every step of the way.

Gibeon was now a traitor in the eyes of its neighbours. Now it would be easier for Israel to attack them. The neighbouring kings were very angry with Gibeon and had to try to stop this treaty from working. So Adoni-Zedek, king of Jerusalem, brought together all the Amorite kings in the southern area and attacked the Gibeonites, who called on Israel for help.

This time Joshua must have inquired of the Lord because the Lord directs the Israelites in battle ([Joshua 10:8](#)). The Amorite alliance was powerless against Israel’s powerful God.

Because of an all night march, Israel took the enemy by surprise ([10:9](#)). This and the hailstorm that the Lord provided caused mass confusion among the enemy and gave Joshua the advantage.

The Lord answered Joshua’s request and caused the sun to stand still. This long day, aided by a hailstorm ([10:11](#)), would have added to the confusion of Joshua’s surprise attack. We don’t know exactly what happened when the sun stood still in the sky ([10:13](#)). One possible way of looking at this is to note that any disruption in the laws of creation concerning the sun’s movement would disrupt a huge number of other laws. Some parts of the globe would burn while others would freeze. Whatever happened, it was a miracle performed by God to gain victory for Israel. It is good to remember that a miracle always does interrupt a law of the universe. That is why it is called a miracle! Only the Lord can do that. Read [Psalm 74:16](#); [Jeremiah 32:17, 27](#).



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Way to Introduce the Story:

Before class, prepare two pieces of plain white paper: Write the word “Gibeon” on both sheets of paper and then set one aside. Crumple and then iron the other sheet a few times until it looks ‘old’. In class, place the “old” paper and a normal piece of paper side by side in front of the children. Let them guess how old each one is. Ask which they think came from far away. Ask how they can tell. After you discuss this for a few minutes then reveal the “trick”. “One time someone tricked Joshua in this same way. They didn’t trick him with paper but they tricked him with their clothes and food.”

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The Story:

After winning the cities of Jericho and Ai, Joshua continued to lead the Israelites in winning the cities of the land of Canaan. This was the land that God had promised to them and his plan was that they win battles to conquer it.

God was on the side of the Israelites so the kings in all of the land were very worried. They decided to join together and form a big army to fight God's people.

Part 1 (The Gibeonites trick the Israelites)

The city of Gibeon was very near where Joshua and the people of Israel were located. The city did not have a king but it was big and had a lot of fighting men. The people of Gibeon knew that God was on the side of the Israelites so they thought up a plan to protect themselves.

The Gibeonites were very tricky. They loaded up their animals and made it look like they had been travelling for a long time. They wore old and worn out clothes and shoes. They even put old dry bread and food in their travel packs.

The Israelites were camped nearby but when the Gibeonites arrived it seemed to Joshua and the rest of the people that their visitors had come from a place far, far away. The men of Israel looked at the old clothes and even tasted the old bread. They were fooled!

The Gibeonites said that even though they were from far away they had heard about how God was helping the Israelites win all of the land. They asked if the people of Israel would make a special agreement to never hurt the people of Gibeon.

A special agreement like this is a very big decision. The men of Israel should have taken the time to pray and ask God to give them wisdom. Instead, they just thought, "This is not that important. God wants us to take over all the cities in Canaan but Gibeon is a city far away. We will just promise to never hurt them." So they made the promise to the Gibeonites.

Three days later the Israelites learned the truth. Gibeon was not an enemy city far away! Gibeon was an enemy city very close to them! They had made a terrible mistake and now they had to keep their promise. They wished so much that they had asked God to give them wisdom instead of rushing right into the agreement.

The Israelite people were not very happy with their leaders. They complained to them that the Gibeonites should not be allowed to get away with this but the leaders said that they had to keep their promise not to hurt them.

Finally, they came to a decision. They would keep their promise and not hurt the Gibeonites. The Gibeonites, however, would have to do work for the Israelites. From then on the Gibeonites would have to carry water and cut wood for the Israelites.

Part 2 (Israel Protects the Gibeonites)

Remember how all of the kings from the nations banded together to fight the Israelites? Now, when they heard that the Gibeonites had made a special treaty with the Israelites they got very angry. They decided to fight with the Gibeonites and teach them a lesson.

When the Gibeonites heard that the other nations were going to attack them, they sent a message to Joshua and the people, "Help! Come and save us or we will be destroyed."

Joshua remembered the promise to the Gibeonites. He led the Israelite soldiers in a battle against the kings and the people of the land. They defeated them in a great victory.

Everyone knew that God was the God of Israel. As the Israelites chased the enemies away large hailstones began to fall from the sky. More enemy soldiers died from the hailstones than were killed by swords.

Joshua and the soldiers had been fighting so long that night would come soon and it would be dark. So Joshua and the soldiers did something no one expected. Joshua told the sun to stand still and it did.

That day God showed that he was God for his people. God made the sun stand still so it continued to be daytime long enough for the Israelites to win the battle. There had never been a battle like this and there never been one like it since that time!

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Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection, student interaction and/or emotion. [Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.](#)

[Download the slideshow](#) or [download the pictures to print](#). Each teacher is unique so only use the illustrations that best relate to the way YOU are telling the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Review Questions:

1. How did the Gibeonites trick Joshua and his men? They dressed in old clothes and used old supplies to make it look as if they had travelled a great distance.
2. Did Joshua ask the Lord to help him make a good decision about the Gibeonite treaty? No
3. When Joshua found out he had been tricked, what happened to the Gibeonites? They became servants to the Israelites
4. What unusual things happened when the Israelite army fought Gibeon's enemies? The enemies were confused, hailstones fell on them, and the sun stood still in the sky
5. What should we do before we make an important decision? Pray to God so that he will help us make the right one?

Song Suggestions:

- [I've Got Something in My Pocket Song](#)
- [Rejoice in the Lord Always Song](#)
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more options.

Learning Activities and Crafts:

[\(How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation\)](#)

Activities:

- Kids will love dressing up and acting this one out!
- Collect a number of products and talk about the various advertisement slogans and promises on the packaging. Guide older children in comparing the promises to the actual products. Advertisements can be "tricky" like the Gibeonites. Wisdom and discernment are required to understand the difference. For example: A food packet can say strawberry "flavoured" without containing actual strawberries. An

advertisement might make a toy sound wonderful by saying it is “new and improved” but maybe we haven’t even played with the original version before.

- Be sure and have the children look the memory verse up in the bible. This can be a good time to make sure they understand what books, chapters, and verses are.
- Write the words of the memory verse on a chalkboard/white board. Have the children read the verse as a group a number of times. Erase one word and have them read the verse. Erase another word and have them say it. Keep erasing a word until the children can say the verse without any words on the board.
- Eat ice-cubes and discuss the hail in the story.
- See ideas from other teacher(s) in the comments below.

Crafts:

- Place a few drops of yellow paint in the centre of a paper. Children can blow the paint through a straw to make a starburst. Do this on any other “sun craft” and discuss the fact that God caused the sun to stand still.

Check the [Teaching Ideas](#) page on this website for ideas that are adaptable to any lesson.



[Click here for “Gibeonite Trick” printables to print \(A4 paper\)](#)

[Click here for “Gibeonite Trick” printables to print \(Letter size-USA\)](#)

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Other Online Resources:

- [The Gibeonites trick Joseph worksheets \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)

<https://www.pinterest.com/marynnz/entering-and-conquering-the-promised-land/>

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