

The Destruction of Deception

October 30 - November 5, 2011

PRAYER: Begin with a few moments of sharing thanks and praises in prayer.

Leaders, it's your call; you may choose to incorporate more information/scriptures as time allows for your small group lesson. **Reflecting:** The first humiliating defeat at Ai should have taught Joshua and the leaders to take time to pray and seek the mind of the Lord. After all, the Lord was the Commander of the army (Josh. 5:13-15) But they walked by sight and not by faith, and unbelief has a hard time waiting (Isa. 28:16; 30:1-2) Now another defeat! The Lord lost glory, the leaders lost stature, and the nation lost a potential victory: "What agreement has the temple of God with idols" (2 Corinthian 6:16) But Joshua did not give up; rather, he made his mistakes work for him (vv. 21-27). That is the mark of a great leader.

OPENER: What was your favorite costume as a child? Why?

Have you ever bought something that later turned out to be a lemon? How did you feel?

Read: Joshua 9:1-15

DISCUSS: How did the kings west of the Jordan react to Israel's conquest of Jericho and Ai? What about the people of Gibeon?

How would you have reacted if you had been a king in that area?

What was the ruse used by the people of Gibeon to trick Joshua and the Israelites? Why do you suppose it worked?

In this regard, what is the significance of the Israelites "sampling" but not "inquiring"? (vv. 12-14)

Read: Joshua 9:16-27

What did the Israelites do when they discovered they had been tricked by the Gibeonites (vv. 16-18)?

How did this affect those responsible for the unpopular treaty?

How did Joshua finally deal with the Gibeonites (vv. 22-23)?

What was the Gibeonites response to Joshua's curse?

PLAN for ACTION:

The Gibeonites knew that their neighbors were fighting a losing battle, for God was fighting for Israel, and no army could resist Him. So, they decided to use guile instead of muscle. If Satan does not defeat you by coming as the devouring lion (1 Peter 5:8-9), he will try again as the deceiving serpent (2 Corinthians 11:3). He never gives up.

The men of Israel "did not inquire of the Lord" (vs. 14) as they should have. Have you ever made an important decision in your life without inquiring of the Lord? What was the result

Have you ever made a promise which later turned out to be difficult or unpopular to keep? What happened?

As a fearful and accursed Gibeonite, would you have fought for your freedom or submitted to perpetual slavery? Why?

Do you readily accept, or usually resist, authority imposed on you? Does it depend on who is doing the imposing? How so?

Strategy was important for Joshua. What does that say about the use of strategy in planning your life? In doing God's work?

How can this group pray for you this week?