

Intro: Rick Warren says it this way: "You aren't being paranoid if they really ARE out to get you!"

As a follower of Jesus Christ there is a spiritual truth you have to come grips with. Someone...and in fact MORE than one someone's, is out to get you! If you ever get to the end of your day and think to yourself, "It feels like I'm under attack, it feels like someone is out to get me, it feels like I have an enemy that wants to destroy me: You Are Right!

~1Pe 5:8 "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."

~Eph 2:2-3 "you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature..."

Every single day as a child of God you are in a battle...and you have to keep your guard up, because all it takes for you to stumble and fall spiritually is to let your guard down, allow yourself to check out for just a moment, and not pay attention to what is going on around you...and trouble comes. That is what happens to Joshua and Israel Ch 9

Joshua 9:1-14 "What We Have Here Is Failure To Communicate!" (READ)

There is a classic scene in the movie "Cool Hand Luke" that speaks to what happened: Israelites: Didn't Communicate with God! Don't know WHY they didn't ask, but when faced with this huge decision...they trusted their own judgment. Like you and I, they did what seemed right to them...without seeking counsel from God...and it cost them!

1. Never Forget: You Have Many Spiritual Enemies.

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| • Some Come directly at you | 1-2 | Kings: | Wage war |
| • Some come indirectly to deceive | 3-6 | Gibeonites: | Deception/Trick |
| • Some come disguised | 2Cor 11:14 | Satan: | Angel of light |
| • Some come bundled! | Eph 2:1-4 | World, Flesh, Devil | All wrapped in one! |

Joshua and the Children of Israel dropped their guard. It is understandable. They have just come through the awful ordeal of defeat at Ai, discovering the deception of Achan, dealing with that and then restoring their relationship with God followed by finally defeating Ai. They are on a roll again. Sometimes that is when Satan attacks:

Illus: Called the Elijah effect: Amazing victory on top of Mt Carmel: Calls down fire from heaven, destroys all the false prophets...and then is confronted and threatened by Jezebel. And he runs...Spiritual Letdown. Whatever happened...Joshua and the Children of Israel made a mistake. Look at what the scripture tells us in 9:14

Jos 9:14 "The men of Israel sampled their provisions but did not inquire of the LORD."

There is a spiritual lesson for us here. We cannot let our spiritual guard down. Even in victory. Especially in victory!

So then, what do we do...How do we guard and protect ourselves in this kind of environment?

2. Wise Words On Counsel: What the Bible Teaches Us!

To avoid the mistake Joshua and the Children of Israel made, I want to look with you at what the bible has to say about what we SHOULD Do...and what we Should Not Do about seeking counsel from God and others.

What We Should NOT Do

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| A. Don't just rely on circumstances: | Joshua 9:12-14 | Looked, Sampled and Trusted what saw and heard |
| B. Don't listen to ungodly counsel: | Psalms 1:1-2 | There is always someone...W/O Jesus rolling dice! |
| C. Don't trust your own wisdom: | Prov 14:12 | It looks right to you...but it is WRONG! Can't see end |
| D. Don't just trust your heart: | Jer 17:9 | Your heart will lead you astray (Start a church!) |
| E. Don't ignore clear scriptures: | Prov 1:24-26 | Refuse to listen, Don't answer, disregard rebuke |

Just like Joshua, we need to learn how to listen to God and not to the voices of everyone else around us. We have to train ourselves to learn how to listen to God...recognize His voice and His work and direction in our lives so that we can follow Him when He leads us. Let's look at some of the things we SHOULD Do!

What We SHOULD Do In Seeking Counsel

A. Immerse ourselves in the right environment:

Henry Blackaby:

He identifies 5 key elements that work together to help us hear God.

Don't wait until "crunch" time to have these things in your life!

"God speaks by the Holy Spirit through the Bible, prayer, circumstances, and the church to reveal Himself, His purposes, and His ways."

B. Let God's word speak loudest:

Psalm 119:105 Start here...NEVER go contrary to His revealed will

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path."

When God's word is clear, it doesn't matter what anyone else says, what circumstances line up, what your heart is crying out for you to do. Follow God.. Obey His word...even when you don't understand or agree

C. Listen to God FIRST:

James 1:5

Before everything else: More important

"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."

D. Learn to distinguish His voice:

1Kings 19:12-13 Gentle Whisper (Training, Time with him, Intimacy)

1Ki 19:12 After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

E. Have more than one counselor:

Prov 8:14

Have more than just one "Go To" person

"For lack of guidance a nation falls, but many advisers make victory sure."

Illus: Just this week: Incredibly difficult ministry decision: 10 people...All different backgrounds, perspectives

F. Look beyond your own interests:

Prov 19:21

What does God want? His Purposes?

"Many are the plans in a man's heart, but it is the LORD's purpose that prevails."

You plans...might not be HIS plans!

Redeem/Forgive/Testimony/Strengthen You/Purify you

G. Walk Alone CAREFULLY:

Prov 12:15

At times you may need to "go it alone" CAREFULLY

"The way of a fool seems right to him, but a wise man listens to advice."

If scripture isn't clear, and all the other voices and counsel and input and circumstances don't line up with what you are hearing from God...You can make the decision to "go it alone." But you do so at risk. CAREFUL!

CONCLUSION:

All of us face decisions in our life that are hard. If we aren't careful, and if we aren't walking closely with God ANY of us can make a wrong decision. Every single one of us has probably been in the situation where we made a decision that we were convinced was right...only to get a little farther down the road and discover...I was wrong. Bad choice

Perhaps this morning you are facing one of those decisions. I want to encourage you...start on your knees, seeking God's wisdom. As the worship team comes forward, join us down front...bring your request, your need, your problem, your question to God...seek His face and His wisdom.

Maybe you find yourself in Joshua's shoes...and you have made a bad decision. You can't go back and change it..but you can start where you are...and go forward. You start in the same place. On you knees...asking God for forgiveness for the past...and wisdom for the future.