

## Sermon – Joshua 9: “Living with mistakes”

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- This is Jacqueline Saburido. 20 years old.
- This is the man who was drink driving and hit Jacqueline with his car in 1999.
- This is Jacqueline after the accident.

One mistake can change your life, or someone else's life, forever.

- Here are you. (silhouette)
- And here is a person you may have hurt by your sin. (silhouette) You made a mistake. Adultery. Lust. Lying. Gossip. Cheating. A bad decisions. Who is that person? What have you done? What are the consequences? Sometimes we think we might “get away” with our mistakes. Other times, there are difficult consequences that we live with for a very long time.

That's what Joshua speaks to us about today – how do we live with mistakes? Mistakes you've made. Mistakes others have made. How do we live with the mess in our lives caused by sin? Let's start by looking at what happened to Israel in Joshua 9:

- **Map.** Israel entered the Promised Land with amazing power. They have taken over two key cities – Jericho and Ai – right in the middle of the land of Canaan. And now all of the kings west of the Jordan are coming to make war against Joshua and Israel to stop them... except the Gibeonites.

The Gibeonites weren't that far from Ai. In fact, if Israel kept going West, in the same direction – through Jericho, through Ai, the next cities were Jerusalem and ... Gibeon! But the Gibeonites knew the power of Israel and their God. So instead of going to war against Israel, they come to make a peace treaty.

But they knew Israel would not make peace with them if they knew they lived next door. They knew that Israel was there to take over the whole land and destroy all the inhabitants as God commanded. So the Gibeonites pretended that they lived a long way away. They got old wine skins, old sandals, old clothes, and they even took mouldy bread! And they came to Joshua to make a peace treaty.

And Joshua says: “We can't do that! You might live nearby, and we're not supposed to make treaties with you.” And the Gibeonites say: “No! We come from a long way away! We're not neighbours! Look at our old clothes and mouldy bread! We've travelled from a LONG way away! This bread was fresh when we left!

And Joshua and the leaders of Israel are convinced by the mouldy bread and old clothes. And they make a treaty. But verse 14 tells us what was really happening here:

- “The men of Israel sampled their provisions but did not inquire of the Lord.”

They checked out the old wine skins and mouldy bread. **But they did not ask God.** And 3 days later they find out that they have been tricked! They've made a treaty with their next door neighbours who God had commanded them to destroy. So instead, they make them servants – water carriers and woodcutters. Israel made a big mistake, because they did come to God and ask him. And now they've made peace with God's enemies!

If our life falls apart, we often come to God in prayer and ask for help. But if things are going fine, we often leave God out of the picture. Just like Derek said last week about God being like an insurance policy – we often only call on him if there's a problem.

Everything was going well for Israel and they're thinking – we've just taken Jericho and Ai! And these people with their mouldy bread want to make a treaty with us. No problem! We don't need to consult with God. It's an easy decision!

And that's the problem. What looks simple to us is not always simple. The danger of sin is not always obvious.

- It's like a child who wants to jump into a river, and his parents are saying: "Don't jump! You don't know how deep it is! You could hit your head on the rocks! You don't know what's under the surface! And 90% of the time, it's fine! (\* **PPT** – zebra) But sometimes, there's danger just below the surface.

What do we learn from this?

**1. \* Even when everything is going well, we should still be seeking God's wisdom and guidance in life.**

Let me give us two reasons for that:

- a. God knows the whole situation. God knows the dangers under the surface of the water. He sees what we don't see. We **always** need his wisdom, because he always knows what is best for us.
- b. We have a personal relationship with God.
  - You can't get married and keep living like your single. Because marriage is a partnership.
  - You can't join a football team and play on your own. You're part of a team. And you need to listen to the coach for directions.
  - You can't be a musician in a band and just play whatever you feel like. You're in a group that needs to play the same music.

We can't be in a relationship with God and just keep doing things our own way. Israel can't just enter the Promised Land and stop talking to God about things! Being in a relationship with God **demand**s that we bring our lives to him each day. And not just when things are bad for us. Even when everything is going well, we should still be seeking God's wisdom and guidance in life.

**2. \* When we fail, (and we all do!), we need to keep seeking God's guidance**

Israel's leaders made a mistake – they made a treaty with the Gibeonites. The rest of Israel say they should break their oath. But Israel's leaders say:

- 9:19: "We have given them our oath by the Lord, the God of Israel, and we cannot touch them now."

Israel's leaders realise that they've made the mistake of not asking God, and they're going to have to **live with the consequences**. So they make the Gibeonites water carriers and woodcutters.

Now, of course, this is not the ideal situation. They were supposed to get rid of every nation in the Promised Land so they wouldn't be corrupted by their false gods and idols. So the situation is not great. But they've made a mistake and now they have to work out how to live with that mistake.

Imagine making a promise that you will never ever kill a living creature. And then you find out that your house has termites. What would you do?

Often when we have to face the consequences of our mistakes, or even just bad decisions, we want to find an easy way out. **Think about adultery.** The way it affects on everyone involved. Whether you're caught or not. Think of the guilt you live with, the pain you cause others, the broken relationships. **Think about gossip.** The effect it has on others. Once you've spoken those words, you can't take them back.

We all sin. And we all often make bad decisions. We all live with mistakes we've made. Sometimes we're fortunate that we don't hurt people too much. But sometimes our mistakes can make life difficult for a very long time. If you hit your spouse, you can't take that back. If you lie to a friend, it undermines that trust. If you steal, murder, commit adultery, gossip, slander, envy, covet... you can't just take those things back. All these things can have a very long lasting effect on our lives and the lives of those around us. And when we make those mistakes, we need to seek God's guidance as we take the next step.

One final thing: How do we live day to day with the consequences of our mistakes? Look at what Joshua teaches us:

**3. \* Even when we're living in a mess, we can still seek God's guidance.**

All of us, to some extent, are living with a mess. You don't know my mess and I don't know yours. But I'd be pretty surprised if any one of us is not dealing with some sort of mess in our lives – a mess that we've caused or a mess caused by someone else. How do we live with that? Long term and short term? Let me suggest two things for us today as we think about the "mess" of our own lives:

**a. If your sin has caused this mess, of course, you need to recognise that sin.**

God calls us to repent, turn away from that sin, and ask for his forgiveness. Accept His forgiveness, and know that you are forgiven because the price for your sin was paid by Jesus in his death on the cross. That's the first step. Recognise the sin in your life, repent, and be forgiven.

**b. Whatever mistakes you're living with, Seek God's guidance for how to live in the middle of that mess.**

Today. Tomorrow. Every day. Seek God's help to live with the consequences of the mistakes in your life. Whether it's your sin or someone else's that's made the mess.

Think of Jacqueline Saburido. 20years old. Badly disfigured in a car accident. That can't be undone. But she can depend on God's strength to get through each difficult day.

It would be nice if we could just "undo" mistakes, or sins, (like clicking the undo button on our computer). But we can't. So we need to depend on God to help us live with those mistakes, until that day Jesus returns. And that's not always very easy. In fact, life is often very painful. But God can carry us through these times.

**So three things:**

1. Keep asking God for his wisdom. Even when your life is going **well**, seek God's wisdom. Listen to him through prayer, through the Bible and through other Christians.
2. When you **do** make a mistake, seek God's guidance again. Listen to him for the next step.
3. And finally, when those times come when you have to live in the middle of a mess, sometimes for a long time, don't look for the easy way out. Again, seek God's help to **face** those consequences each day.

We have a gracious and loving God, no matter what mistakes we've made, or what mess we're living in. And God says that YOU are NOT a mistake, and that HE will never leave you. Whatever mistakes you've made, or whatever consequences you're living with, let's take some time right now, to **bring** our mistakes, **and** our sin, and **all** our mess, to God, in prayer. Let's pray.