

"The men of Israel sampled their provisions but did not inquire of the LORD. ¹⁵ Then Joshua made a treaty of peace with them to let them live, and the leaders of the assembly ratified it by oath." Joshua 9:14-15 NIV

When you read about Joshua in the Old Testament, you can't help but be impressed. He spent most of his life as a very faithful servant to Moses, and later on he was part of the contingent who went to "spy out" the Promised Land for the people of Israel while they were in the desert. He was part of the small courageous minority voices who declared that they indeed could take the land.

Once he takes over at the death of Moses, you know he is a man of great faith and obedience to God. The above scripture is taken from Chapter 9 in Joshua. Gibeon was established before he and the people of Israel arrived on the scene to conquer the land. Gibeon had heard how Joshua and company were always victorious, so they decided to deceive Joshua and company, and make peace.

If you have ever read Joshua up to this point, his action with the Gibeonites is totally out of character for him. What happened? How did Joshua get "snookered" by the Gibeonites? We find a key in verse 14 where it says they "*did not inquire of the LORD*". Joshua and company bought the Gibeonite deception hook line and sinker, made ***an assumption but did not go to God first***.

If you read the consequences of Joshua's actions, they lead Israel into a very unnecessary war.

This story about someone as faithful as Joshua, getting "snookered" raises an important question for us. Do we, as people of faith seriously ask for God's guidance when we are faced with a decision before we act on it? In other words, before we even debate the pros and cons of the decision, or even if the answer to the decision is a "no brainer" do we go to God first?

Recently I was in such a situation. Something was placed before my wife and I that looked very good. It seemed as if the decision was a "no brainer" in the affirmative. I assumed it obviously was something God wanted, so the decision was made without any effort to go to God first in prayer for discernment. In fact I had the gall to pray to God after I had made my mind up, in effect asking God to "bless" my decision. Very soon the Holy Spirit began to impress on me my folly and I began to think that this "no brainer" decision was not the right one. Sure enough the next day when consequences of the decision began to "play out" they were not very good indeed. Thankfully I soon saw my folly in the matter, feeling like a "sadder but wiser person" and I asked God for forgiveness. God by his grace, eventually put things on the right track again.

"Pray first" was a saying, and eventually part of mission statement in the former Lutheran Synod I served in. I learned anew, that "pray first" is not just a nice spiritual phrase. It is the unconditional prerequisite before we attempt or decide on anything; having a sincere openness to God's answer even if God's answer winds up being different than ours.

Then by following God's answer we can always be assured of the best possible result.

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