

Date: 4 Aug 2024 | **Speaker:** Ps Ernie Song | **Topic:** The Gibeonite Deception | **Scripture:** Joshua 9

SPIRITUAL OBJECTIVES

At the end of the sermon discussion, cell members will:

1. **Recognize the Dangers of Deception:** To help members understand the subtlety and pervasiveness of deception, and how it can lead them astray from God's will and purposes.
2. **Seek God's Guidance and Wisdom:** To encourage members to surrender their lives to God, seek His guidance and wisdom in all aspects of life, and trust in His sovereignty and provision, avoiding the pitfalls of deception and walking in the freedom and truth of God's Word.

SERMON SUMMARY

Ps Ernie explores Joshua 9, the story of the Gibeonite deception, highlighting the importance of obedience and seeking God's guidance. Israel's journey under Joshua demonstrates God's faithfulness in times of obedience, despite seemingly impractical commands. In contrast, disobedience leads to negative consequences.

The Gibeonite deception serves as a cautionary tale about the dangers of deception and the need for discernment. The sermon emphasizes spiritual vigilance, encouraging believers to live according to God's ways, trust in His faithfulness, and avoid deception. By doing so, we can walk in truth and freedom, despite challenges and obstacles.

SERMON RECAP

Ps Ernie delves into the Book of Joshua, specifically **Joshua 9**, which narrates the intriguing story of the Gibeonite deception. He sets the stage by highlighting the Old Testament's narrative style, which includes both the successes and failures of God's people. These stories are not just historical records but serve as lessons for living according to God's will.

The sermon reviews Israel's journey under Joshua, focusing on three key events: the miraculous crossing of the Jordan River, the battle of Jericho, and the covenant renewal through circumcision. These events exemplify Israel's obedience to God's commands, even when they seemed impractical or risky. For instance, crossing the Jordan River during flood season required a miracle, and circumcising males before battle left the Israelites vulnerable. However, God's faithfulness was evident as He removed obstacles and granted victory when the Israelites acted in obedience.

In contrast, instances of disobedience led to negative consequences. The sin of Achan, which led to Israel's initial defeat at Ai, serves as a prime example. The Gibeonite deception further illustrates the importance of seeking God's guidance and the consequences of acting independently of Him (**Joshua 9:14**). The Gibeonites, fearing annihilation, disguised themselves as travellers from a distant land and tricked Israel into making a peace treaty with them. This story highlights the importance of discernment and the need to seek God's counsel in all decisions.

The sermon delves into the historical and theological background of the Gibeonites, tracing their lineage back to Canaan, the grandson of Noah. Noah had cursed Canaan because of Ham's sin, which manifested in the sinful practices of the Canaanite nations, including severe sexual immorality and child sacrifice. The Gibeonites were part of these nations, which God commanded the Israelites to destroy due to their corrupt practices. Including such nations in the Biblical narrative serves as a warning about the consequences of disobedience and the pervasive nature of sin.

The broader lesson from these stories is that challenges and obstacles will arise, whether in obedience or disobedience. However, the crucial difference is whether God is with His people in these challenges. When Israel obeyed, God fought for them, removing obstacles. In contrast, disobedience led to God withholding His intervention, as seen in the defeats at Ai and the complications from the Gibeonite treaty.

The sermon concludes by emphasizing God's faithfulness and the importance of obedience. Pastor Ernie encourages the congregation to live according to God's ways, recognizing that while this path may attract challenges, God's presence and support make all the difference. The story of the Gibeonites serves as both a cautionary tale and a reminder of the grace and mercy that God extends, even when His people fall short.

The theme of deception is explored further, particularly the Gibeonite deception and its implications. The sermon discusses the Hebrew roots of the concept of deception, highlighting words like "Rama" and "Nasha," and drawing parallels to [Genesis 3](#), where Eve is deceived by the serpent. This deception led to the fall of humanity and serves as a reminder of the ongoing struggle against deception.

The sermon also addresses contemporary forms of deception through advertisements and social media, illustrating how false realities are often presented. In today's world, deception can take many forms, from subtle manipulation to outright lies. The sermon emphasizes the need for spiritual vigilance and seeking God's guidance to avoid deception. Believers are called to remain steadfast in their faith, discerning truth from falsehood, and living according to God's Word.

In conclusion, Ps Ernie's sermon provides valuable insights into the importance of obedience, discernment, and spiritual vigilance. The story of the Gibeonites serves as a powerful reminder of the consequences of disobedience and the need to seek God's guidance in all decisions. As believers, we are called to live according to God's ways, trusting in His faithfulness and presence, even in the face of challenges and obstacles. By doing so, we can avoid the pitfalls of deception and walk in the truth and freedom that God provides.

Discussion Questions

1. Can you recall a time when you were deceived or misled? How did you recover from the experience, and what did you learn from it?

Leader's Notes

- a. **Encourage members to reflect on their personal experiences with deception**, such as:
 - A time when they believed a lie or misinformation
 - A situation where they were misled or deceived by someone else
 - An experience where they deceived themselves or others
- b. **Ask follow-up questions to prompt deeper reflection**, such as:
 - What led you to believe the deception?
 - How did you feel when you discovered the truth?
 - What steps did you take to recover from the experience?
 - What did you learn from the experience, and how has it shaped your approach to decision-making?
- c. **Explore how members overcame the deception**, such as:
 - Seeking guidance from trusted friends, family, or mentors
 - Turning to God's Word for truth and wisdom
 - Learning to discern truth from lies
 - Developing healthier coping mechanisms
- d. **Discuss the importance of seeking God's guidance and wisdom in decision-making**, using Bible references such as:
 - "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths." - **Proverbs 3:5-6**
 - "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?" - **Jeremiah 17:9**
- e. **Emphasize how seeking God's guidance can help members**:
 - Avoid deception and misinformation
 - Make wise decisions that align with God's will
 - Develop a stronger relationship with God
 - Grow in discernment and wisdom.

Transition

As we reflect on our personal experiences with deception, let's now consider how we can apply the lessons learned to our daily lives. The Bible warns us that deception can lead us astray, but it also provides guidance on how to avoid it.

2. In what areas of your life do you tend to rely on your own wisdom and feelings rather than seeking God's direction? How can you surrender these areas to God and seek His guidance?

Leader's Notes

- a. **Encourage members to reflect on areas of their lives where they may be vulnerable to deception**, such as:
 - Relationships: Are there any relationships in your life where you may be compromising your values or beliefs?
 - Finances: Are there any financial decisions or habits that may be leading you astray?
 - Goals and ambitions: Are there any goals or ambitions that may be driving you to prioritize worldly success over God's will?
 - Thought patterns: Are there any negative thought patterns or habits that may be deceiving you about yourself or your circumstances?

Discussion Questions

- b. **Ask follow-up questions to prompt deeper reflection**, such as:
- What are the potential consequences of allowing deception to take hold in this area?
 - How has seeking God's guidance impacted your decision-making in the past?
 - What practical steps can you take to surrender this area to God and seek His guidance?
 - How can you trust God's sovereignty and provision in this area?
- c. **Discuss the importance of seeking God's guidance and wisdom in all aspects of life**, using Bible references such as:
- "Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to Him; trust in Him, and He will act." - **Psalm 37:4-5**
 - "Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established." - **Proverbs 16:3**
- d. **Emphasize how seeking God's guidance can help members**:
- Identify and avoid potential pitfalls and deceptions
 - Make wise decisions that align with God's will
 - Develop a stronger relationship with God
 - Grow in discernment and wisdom
- e. **Encourage members to surrender their lives to God**, using language such as:
- "I surrender my relationships to You, Lord. Help me to prioritize Your will and guidance in my interactions with others."
 - "I surrender my finances to You, Lord. Help me to trust in Your provision and guidance in my financial decisions."
 - "I surrender my goals and ambitions to You, Lord. Help me to prioritize Your will and purposes for my life."

Transition

Other than doing self-reflection and seeking God's guidance for our lives, leaders can further discuss on how the Cell group can support one another in this area of spiritual battle.

3. How can we as a Cell group support one another in avoiding deception and staying grounded in God's truth?

Leader's Notes

As a Cell group, we can play a vital role in helping each other avoid deception by:

- Encouraging open and honest sharing of struggles and doubts
- Providing a safe space for questioning and seeking clarification on biblical teachings
- Holding each other accountable to seek God's guidance and wisdom in decision-making
- Praying for discernment and spiritual protection for one another
- Studying and exploring Scripture together to deepen our understanding of God's truth

Closing

As we close, let us remember that deception can be subtle and pervasive, but with God's guidance and the support of our Cell group, we can stay grounded in His truth. Let us commit to praying for one another and seeking God's wisdom in all areas of our lives. May we be a source of encouragement and strength for each other as we navigate the challenges of deception and walk in the freedom and truth of God's Word. "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your paths" (**Proverbs 3:5-6**).

Consider dividing the group into micro-groups for a deeper time of sharing as well as praying for the following items:

1. Sermon Application

- *Protection from Deception:* Pray for help to be aware of the tactics of the enemy and protect us from deception in all areas of our lives. Give us discernment and wisdom to recognize the truth and resist lies and misinformation.
- *Guidance and Wisdom:* Pray to surrender our lives to God and ask for Your guidance and wisdom in all our decisions and actions. Help us to trust in Your sovereignty and provision and give us the courage to follow Your leading.
- *Surrender and Trust:* Pray to help us to surrender our relationships, finances, goals, and ambitions to You. Teach us to trust in Your goodness and provision and give us the strength to prioritize Your will and purposes for our lives above our own desires and plans.

2. RiverLife

Pray for our mission teams going into the nations:

- a. **8-12 Aug: Ministry & Exploration Trip in Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam.** An inter-generational team of 31 RiverLifers, including 3 children, will be ministering in local churches and communities. Let's pray for spiritual breakthroughs, healings and salvations as people encounter the Lord.

Prayer Pointers

- For an outpouring of God's Spirit upon the land and its people. For the Lord to soften the ground where living waters will flow.
- For the kids, adults, patients and local partners that we will be ministering to – to have an open heart and teachable spirit so that they may receive the Father's love and healing, and be filled and baptised by the Holy Spirit.
- For journey mercy over the team as they travel to and around Vietnam and that they will be effective when they minister God's love and power.
- For the team to be sharp in hearing and being led by the Holy Spirit.
- For leaders serving locally to gain a deeper love for Jesus and His church, and a sure understanding of the spiritual direction for their generation and the nation.

- b. **8-12 Aug: Youth Camp in Sarangani, Philippines.** A team of five young adults will minister at a youth camp. Let's pray for spiritual growth and a sense of belonging among the youths.

Prayer Pointers

- For every youth attendee to have a profound encounter with God and a good understanding of the teachings. Pray for hearts to be open and receptive to the Holy Spirit's leading and teaching as well as a deepening of faith and a stronger relationship with Christ.
- For good health and protection against illness and injury over campers, leaders and volunteers. For God's protection over campgrounds, facilities, and all transportation to and from the camp.
- For favourable weather conditions so that outdoor activities can go as planned.
- For camp organisers, leaders and speakers to be led by the Holy Spirit in all their preparations and activities. That they may have wisdom, creativity, and discernment in running the camp.
- For all necessary resources, including finances, materials, and volunteers, to be abundantly provided. For any logistical challenges to be smoothly resolved.

3. World

- Continue to pray for the various nations that are at war:
 - a. Russia and Ukraine
 - b. Myanmar (Civil War) – Pray for the situation where military service was made compulsory for man and woman between the ages of 18 and 35.
 - c. Israel & Hamas – For any retaliation from Hamas and Iran as a result of the killing of Hamas' leader
- Continue to pray for countries that have an escalated conflict situation:
 - a. Japan, China and the Philippines in the South China Sea
 - b. North & South Korea
- Continue to pray for countries recovering from recent natural disasters:
 - a. Taiwan (Earthquake)
 - b. Indonesia (Volcanic Eruption)
 - c. South East Asia – Heatwave across various countries
 - d. Eastern China – Typhoon Gaemi
 - e. Northern Japan – Rains and flooding
 - f. India – Heatwave
- Pray for Singapore
 - a. Pray for PM Lawrence Wong and his cabinet as they begin a new chapter for Singapore
 - b. Pray for a stability in the cost of living in Singapore
- Other Global Issues
 - a. Pray for the United States of America as they recover from the assassination attempt of Donald Trump
 - b. Pray for the UK as a new Prime Minister and Cabinet governs the nation
 - c. Pray for the attacks on French railways amidst of the Olympics.

1. **Marriage Retreat. 23-25 Nov.** Forest City Marina Hotel. Cost: \$600 per couple. A meaningful weekend retreat for married couples to spend unhurried and uninterrupted time with each other to learn together, and evaluate and strengthen their marriage. Registration: rlc.sg/mr (Capacity: 40 couples. Closing Date: 30 September)
2. **The Parents Gathering. Sat, 17 Aug. 2.30pm-6pm, Grace Chapel.** Focus On the Family will be running two sessions in our upcoming gathering:

1) Raising Resilient Kids

We live in an increasingly fast-paced and competitive world, where the pressure to succeed academically and perform can leave our children feeling panic-stricken and overwhelmed. Discover how you can help your child by understanding your child's stressors, relishing the gift of failure and building psychological resilience.

2) Raising Relationally-Smart Kids

Talking about sex can be one of the most daunting tasks for parents, especially if we never had the subject broached with us when growing up. How then can we confidently discuss healthy sexuality, love, and relationships with our children? Discover how you can equip your child to make wise decisions from young for their body and in their relationships.

Speaker

Joshua Liong is an international speaker and trainer on issues of youth, sexuality, marriage and parenting. Currently the Principal Trainer at Focus on the Family Singapore he loves connecting with young people and has spent more than 20 years strategising on ways to better equip them for life and relationships.

About RiverLife's Parents Gathering

All parents are invited to come together quarterly to connect with and support one another through the journey of parenting. As we discover more about ourselves and our children, may we grow to become parents that God intended us to be.

For more info & to register: rlc.sg/pg *There is no cost to join the gatherings.*

3. **Join the RiverLife Choir.** The choir meets twice a month for rehearsals and serve once a month at our English service. As a RiverLife Choir member, you will:
 - a. Lead God's people in worship. This is a calling, a joy and a privilege!
 - b. Develop the voice God has given you to praise Him
 - c. Be part of a team and get to serve with fellow RiverLifers

You will be invited for an Audition & Interview on Sat, 17 Aug upon sign up.

Sign up now: rlc.sg/serve (Kindly select 'Choir' under 'Worship & Music Ministry' in the signup form.)

4. **Alpha At RiverLife (Chinese Run).** 24 Aug – 26 Oct 2024, 9 In-Person Sessions. Alpha brings you on a journey to explore life's biggest questions - Who are you and why are you here on earth? If there's a God, what would you ask Him? All your questions about life, faith and God are welcomed at Alpha. Join us at our next run!
 - Find out more: rlc.sg/alpha-chi
 - Sign up online: rlc.sg/join-alphachi

5. **Current Sermon Series (7 July – 25 August): The Book of Joshua: Walking with God in Faith & Obedience.** As we continue to trek the Israelites' journey after entering the Promised Land, we realise we are far from the end of their story. There were still battles to fight, enemies to defeat and above all – there was a choice to be made. A choice to obey God fully and walk with Him daily. A choice to believe the Promise Keeper would not fail them. This series of messages will help us recognise that we're presented with the same choice today. In Joshua's last words to the people he led, he urges them to cling tightly to the Lord and be very careful to love Him. Perhaps he knew it would be a choice they had to make every day to see God's promises fulfilled. Every day, we have a choice to make. Would we choose to love God, trust in Him and walk in His ways? When we do so as His people, our lives will testify of who God is. This second part of our series based on the book of Joshua covers chapters 5 to 24.

Catch up on Part 1 here: rlc.sg/joshuapart1

6. **40.Day 2024.** 1 Jul - 9 Aug. For 40 days starting 1 Jul until Singapore's National Day, all believers in Singapore, regardless of church or denomination, are invited to unite in prayer for our nation. We encourage those who are committing to pray and convicted to fast, to also fast a meal a day for the 40-day period. This year's three prayer emphases are:
- Turning Singapore Godward
 - Winning the Youth
 - Blessing the Nations

Subscribe to the following for daily updates starting Mon, 1 Jul:

- Website: lovesingapore.org.sg
- YouTube: youtube.com/lovesingaporeonline
- Facebook: facebook.com/lovesingapore.org.sg
- Instagram: instagram.com/lovesingaporeonline

7. **SPYCES (Spiritual Parenting of Young Couples).** 1, 8, 15, 22 & 29 Sep 2pm-5pm. Online via Zoom Fees: \$10 per participant. SPYCES is a series of five workshop sessions where participants will connect with fellow parents in the same season, and learn biblical and practical ways of relating to their children and grandchildren.

For more info: rlc.sg/spyces-info

8. **RiverLife Missions.** Mission trip schedule for 2024 is out now on our Missions website! Discover how you can sow into the nations this year: rlc.sg/missions

- YA Gatherings (For Young Adults in their 20s). First Saturday Every Month, 5pm-8.30pm Victory Chapel (Level 1).**
The YA Gathering is a space where young adults can get together to connect and build community. This gathering is made up of two components – Community Conversations & Communal Dinner – both with a focus on relationship building and life conversations. If you are interested in joining the gatherings and would like to find out more, connect with us on our Telegram Channel: [rlc.sg/ya_](https://t.me/rlc.sg/ya_)

Gathering Dates: 24 Feb, 6 Apr, 4 May, 1 Jun, 3 Aug, 7 Sep, 5 Oct, 2 Nov

YA Camp: 5-7 Jul

Christmas Outreach: 14 Dec

- RiverLife Prayer Meetings.**

- *RLC Prayer Room.* Tue, 8-9.30pm, Victory Chapel. (Livestream: rlc.sg/rpr-watch)
- *Revive Nights.* Wed, 8pm – 9.30pm, Victory Chapel. (Livestream: rlc.sg/revivenights)

We encourage you to set aside every Wednesday for a time of fasting.

- Quarterly Calendar for Key English Adult Congregation Events**

**Some dates are tentative and subjected to change. Stay updated via our digital bulletin and our social media channels for the latest information.*

Quarter 2	Quarter 3
<p><u>May</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 May to 01 Jun – SuperLife Camp <p><u>June</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2, 23, 30 Jun – Marriage Preparation Course #2 • 08 Jun – Caleb Ministry Gathering, Water Baptism Class #2 • 09 Jun – RiverLife AGM • 13 to 16 Jun – Youth Camp • 27 Jun – Fun Day (Youth) • 29 Jun – Parents Gathering #2 	<p><u>July</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 to 21 Jul – RTF 1B • 21 Jul – EA Welcome Lunch • 28 Jul – The Courtship Journey <p><u>August</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 03 Aug – YA Gathering • 03 Aug to 3 Oct – Alpha Run #2 • 04 Aug – Leaders Equipping • 10 Aug – Caleb Ministry Gathering: Outing • 11 Aug – Water Baptism Service #2 • 17 Aug – Parents Gathering #3 • 24 to 25 Aug – RLC 33rd Anniversary Weekend, RTF (Round Robin) <p><u>September</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 07 Sep – YA Gathering • 14 Sep – Caleb Ministry Gathering • 01 to 15 Sep – Marriage Preparation Course #3 • 01 to 29 Sep – SPYces • 06 to 15 Sep – Equipping #2: Numbers • 14 Sep – Caleb Ministry Gathering • 22 Sep – EA Mid-Autumn Lunch Outreach

Quarter 4

October

- 05 Oct – YA Gathering, Water Baptism Class #3
- 06 to 20 – Marriage Preparation Course #3
- 12 Oct – Caleb Ministry Gathering
- 13 Oct – Discipleship @ Home for Pre-School Parents (Parents Equipping)
- 16 to 23 Oct – Feast of the Tabernacles
- 19 Oct – Fun Day (Youth)
- 26 Oct – Local Outreach (Youth)

November

- 02 Nov – YA Gathering
- 7 to 9 Nov – Ministry Orientation Camp for Sec 1s (Youth)
- 9 Nov – Caleb Ministry Gathering
- 10 Nov – Discipleship @ Home for Primary School Parents (Parents Equipping)
- 10 Nov – Water Baptism Service #3
- 23-25 Nov – Marriage Retreat

December

- 14 Dec – YA Christmas Outreach, Caleb Ministry Gathering
- 19 to 21 Dec – Youth Conference
- 21-22 Dec – Christmas Outreach Weekend
- 28 Dec – Parents Gathering #4

Ministry & Opportunities



1. The 9M Ministry.

This ministry provides prayer support for expectant mothers on their 9-month journey of pregnancy. Sisters-in-Christ who are fellow RiverLifers are assigned as Prayer Buddies to walk alongside mums who sign up to receive prayer support.

- Receive Prayer Support: rlc.sg/9m
- Provide Prayer Support: rlc.sg/serve

2. Missions Microsite.

Discover how you can go, give and pray for the nations. Let's make a difference in the nations together! For more information, visit rlc.sg/missions.

3. RiverLife Cares Opportunities.

Enquiries/Registration: rlc.sg/serve-rlcar

4. Prayer Ministry.

If you require prayer ministry for any issues you face (eg. fear, worry, etc), you can sign up for RiverLife's RTF ministry: bit.ly/rlcrtf

1. Bible Reading Plan.

The church has provided 3 undated Bible Reading plans that will serve as a resource for those who wish to follow a Bible Reading plan. Link: rlc.sg/brp

- 2 Year Chronological Bible Reading Plan.
- 3 Year Bible Reading Schedule (Alternating readings between Old and New Testament passages)
- Redemptive Historical Bible Reading Plan (At your own pace, focusing on the redemption story)

2. RiverLife Podcast.

The RiverLife Podcast allows you to listen to RiverLife content anytime, anywhere! The link to go to is rlc.sg/podcast or simply search 'The RiverLife Podcast' on Spotify.

3. Spiritual Growth Resources.

We have put together a curated list of recommended resources for the RiverLife family. These resources (books, articles, podcasts and videos) are recommendations for the various spiritual growth stages as you seek to grow deeper in the River of God this year. You can access them at rlc.sg/resource. This list will be continually populated throughout the year.

4. Testimony.

If you have a testimony to share, you can write to us at stories@riverlife.org.sg to share with us your testimony as an encouragement to others.

5. Stay Connected with RLC.

Follow us to stay updated on latest church news and happenings.

WhatsApp Broadcast: rlc.sg/wachannelinvite

Telegram Channel: t.me/RiverLifeChurch

Facebook & Instagram: [@riverlifechurchsg](https://www.instagram.com/riverlifechurchsg)

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