

DON'T MOVE WITHOUT GOD!

JOSHUA 9:14-15

Abstract

A failure to seek God before entering agreements or commitments can result in consequences that are difficult or impossible to reverse

DR. DARRYL T. CANADY
RODMAN STREET CHURCH 10.4.26

DON'T MOVE WITHOUT GOD!

JOSHUA 9:14-15

DR. DARRYL T. CANADY

10.4.26

Title: Don't Move Without God

Sermon Summary: What happens when we trust what we can see over what God can reveal? Drawing from Joshua 9:14-15, this sermon calls believers to make God the foundation of every decision before acting. Israel falls into a trap not because they lacked intelligence or experience, but because they relied on evidence alone and left God out of the conversation entirely. The Israelites examined the visible evidence and trusted their own judgment and were deceived with stale bread, worn sandals, and a convincing story, and Israel bought it without ever stopping to ask God what was really going on.

The lesson cuts deep: appearance is not always reality. Proverbs 14:12 reminds us that there is a way that seems right but leads to destruction, and 2 Corinthians 5:7 calls us to live by faith and not by sight. We are invited here to examine how often we make significant decisions based on incomplete information, trusting our eyes, our experience, and our instincts while leaving the one who knows the end from the beginning completely out of the process. This message challenges us to recognize that discernment is not the same as experience, and that wisdom is not the same as intelligence. No matter how much we have seen or how long we have been walking this journey, we still need God's perspective on every open door, every new relationship, and every opportunity that presents itself.

The pastor uses this narrative to warn against the danger of letting action precede prayer, emphasizing that spiritual discernment is superior to human experience, education, or emotion. The sermon challenges believers to resist the temptation of moving on incomplete information, to resist reducing God to a last resort, and to cultivate a lifestyle of consistent prayer and inquiry before every major decision. The message closes with a call to surrender personal will and invite God to order every step of life.

Chapters

Chapter 1: The Danger of Acting Without God

Drawing from Joshua 9:14-15, we are warned that moving forward without first consulting God can lead us into deception and regret.

Chapter 2: The Evidence We Examine Is Never Enough

We cannot trust appearances alone to guide our decisions, because what looks right is not always what is right.

Chapter 3: The Inquiry We Must Never Exclude

The tragedy of Israel's mistake was not that they lacked evidence but that they simply did not ask God, and we make the same error when we substitute prayer for our own understanding.

Chapter 4: The Agreement We Enter Without God Can Cost Us

When we move without consulting God, we can lock ourselves into commitments we never should have made, but God's grace is still able to work even through our mistakes.

Key Points:

- The Israelites were deceived because they examined visible evidence but did not inquire of the Lord, illustrating that what appears right is not always right

- The word "then" in verse 15 reveals a dangerous progression: they did not pray, and then they proceeded, warning believers not to let action come before seeking God
- Human experience, education, and natural understanding are valuable but must never replace dependence on God, whose knowledge encompasses the end from the beginning
- Prayer is not merely asking God to bless decisions already made, but genuinely seeking His direction before decisions are formed
- Jesus himself modeled consistent prayer before major decisions, demonstrating that dependence on God is a mark of spiritual maturity, not weakness
- Waiting on God is not wasting time; it is giving God room to lead and protect believers from costly mistakes
- A failure to seek God before entering agreements or commitments can result in consequences that are difficult or impossible to reverse
- God's grace can work through bad decisions, but His desire is to guide believers before trouble rather than only rescue them after it
- The safest place a believer can occupy is the center of God's will, reached through consistent, sincere prayer

Scripture Reference:

- Joshua 9:14-15, which describes how the Israelites sampled the Gibeonites' provisions but did not inquire of the Lord before making a treaty with them
- Supporting references include Proverbs 14:12, on the way that appears right but leads to destruction; 2 Corinthians 5:7, on living

by faith rather than sight; 1 Samuel 16:7, on God looking at the heart rather than outward appearance; Psalm 139, on God's complete knowledge of a person's thoughts and ways; Isaiah 46:10, on God declaring the end from the beginning; Proverbs 3:5-6, on trusting God rather than leaning on personal understanding; James 1:5, on asking God for wisdom; Luke 5:16, on Jesus withdrawing to pray; Luke 6:12-13, on Jesus praying through the night before choosing the twelve disciples; 1 Samuel 30:8, on David inquiring of the Lord before pursuing the enemy; Romans 8:28, on God working all things together for good for those who love Him; and Psalm 25:4, on asking God to show His ways and teach His paths

Stories:

- The Gibeonite deception from Joshua 9, in which a neighboring people disguised themselves as travelers from a distant land, presenting worn sandals and stale bread as evidence of a long journey, and secured a peace treaty with Israel because the Israelites trusted what they saw without asking God
- Samuel's visit to Jesse's house from 1 Samuel 16, in which the prophet nearly anointed the wrong son as king because he judged by outward appearance, until God reminded him that He looks at the heart
- David's response at Ziklag from 1 Samuel 30, in which David chose to inquire of the Lord before pursuing the enemy who had raided the city and taken families captive, contrasting with Israel's failure to seek God in Joshua 9
- The pastor's personal account of hearing the song "When Jesus Says Yes" twice in close succession, once while driving and once while walking the property of the LIFE Male STEAM Academy,

which he interpreted as divine confirmation of the ministry's direction

- The pastor's description of speaking to 140 young Black boys at the LIFE Male STEAM Academy on a Friday, addressing language, vocabulary, and the importance of being well-spoken, and recognizing the work as a God idea rather than a personal ambition
- A reference to timeshare sales tactics as an illustration of how external pressure can rush decisions, and the importance of refusing to let someone else's urgency become a personal emergency

Here is a list of all scripture references mentioned or alluded to in the sermon:

1. Joshua 9:14-15 - The central text of the sermon, concerning Israel's failure to inquire of the Lord before making a treaty with the Gibeonites.
2. Joshua 9:16 - Three days after the treaty, Israel discovered the Gibeonites were their neighbors.
3. Proverbs 14:12 - There is a way that appears right but leads to death.
4. 2 Corinthians 5:7 - We live by faith and not by sight.
5. 1 Samuel 16:7 - God looks at the heart, not the outward appearance, referenced in the context of Samuel anointing the next king at Jesse's house.
6. Psalm 139:2-4 - God knows when we sit and rise, perceives our thoughts, and knows what we will say before we say it.

7. Isaiah 46:10 - God makes known the end from the beginning.
8. Proverbs 3:5 - Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.
9. Proverbs 3:6 - In all your ways submit to God and he will make your paths straight.
10. James 1:5 - If anyone lacks wisdom, they should ask God.
11. Luke 5:16 - Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.
12. Luke 6:12-13 - Before choosing the twelve disciples, Jesus spent a night in prayer.
13. 1 Samuel 30:8 - David inquired of the Lord before pursuing the raiding party that attacked Ziklag.
14. Isaiah 40:31 - Those who wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength and mount up with wings as eagles.
15. Psalm 25:4 - A prayer asking God to show his ways and teach his paths.
16. James 4:2 - We have not because we ask not, alluded to in the discussion of Israel's failure to ask God.
17. Romans 8:28 - In all things God works for the good of those who love him.

QUOTES:

Everything that looks right ain't right. Everything that sounds good ain't good. Every opportunity ain't your opportunity. Every open door ain't your door. Everybody who smiles at you ain't for you. And every person who says, trust me, doesn't deserve your trust.

Don't let your then come before your prayer.

Prayer on the front end can save you pain on the back end.

Sometimes we don't inquire because we don't want God's answer.

Sometimes we already know what we want, and we don't want God interfering with what we want.

I would rather ask God before I move than to beg God to fix after I move.

Don't make a permanent decision based on some temporary information.

Don't let somebody else's urgency become your emergency.

There is a difference between a good idea and a God idea.

A bad decision does not have to become the end of your destiny. God can teach you through your bad decision. God can mature you through your bad decision. God can give you wisdom because of your bad decision.

Sometimes experience can become dangerous when experience convinces you that you don't need to inquire anymore.

DON'T MOVE WITHOUT GOD!

JOSHUA 9:14-15

DR. DARRYL T. CANADY

10.4.26

5-Day Bible Reading Plan and Devotional Guide

"Don't Move Without God"

Based on Joshua 9:14-15

Day 1: When Sight Is Not Enough

Reading: Joshua 9:14-15; Proverbs 14:12

Devotional: The Israelites made one of their costliest mistakes not through rebellion, but through overconfidence in what they could see. The Gibeonites looked convincing. The evidence seemed solid. The story added up. But appearances are not always reality. Proverbs 14:12 reminds us that a path can look right and still lead somewhere destructive. God does not call us to ignore what we observe, but he does call us to submit what we observe to his greater knowledge. Before you act on what looks right, pause and ask whether God has confirmed it. Your eyes can only tell you so much.

Reflection: What decision are you currently making based primarily on what things look like rather than what God has spoken?

Practical Application: Before making one decision today, however small, take a moment to pray and ask God for clarity beyond what you can see.

Day 2: The Danger of the Unanswered Question

Reading: James 1:5; 1 Samuel 30:6-8

Devotional: Israel had access to God. God was not hiding. God was not silent. They simply did not ask. James 1:5 tells us that God generously gives wisdom to anyone who asks, without finding fault. David, in one of his most desperate moments, facing a burned city and a mutinous army, still stopped to inquire of the Lord before pursuing his enemies. The result was complete restoration. The tragedy in Joshua 9 is not that God failed Israel. It is that Israel never invited God into the

conversation. Prayer is not a last resort. It is the first step. God is always available. The question is whether you are asking.

Reflection: Are there areas in your life where you have been making decisions without genuinely asking God first?

Practical Application: Set aside ten minutes today specifically to ask God about something you have been trying to figure out on your own.

Day 3: Experience Is Not Discernment

Reading: Proverbs 3:5-6; 1 Samuel 16:6-7

Devotional: Samuel was a prophet. He had walked with God for decades. Yet when he stood before Jesse's sons, he almost chose the wrong man because he trusted what he saw and what experience told him a king should look like. God had to correct him, reminding him that people look at the outward appearance while God looks at the heart. Experience is valuable, but it can become a subtle trap when it convinces you that you no longer need to inquire. Proverbs 3:5-6 does not tell you to abandon your understanding. It tells you not to lean on it. There is a difference between using wisdom and replacing God with it.

Reflection: Has your experience, education, or track record ever caused you to stop seeking God's direction before moving forward?

Practical Application: Identify one area where you tend to rely on your own expertise. Intentionally bring that area before God in prayer this week.

Day 4: Pray Before You Proceed

Reading: Luke 6:12-13; Luke 22:41-44

Devotional: Jesus, who was God in the flesh and possessed all authority in heaven and earth, still withdrew to pray before major decisions. Before choosing the twelve disciples, he spent an entire night in prayer. Before going to the cross, he prayed in Gethsemane with such intensity that Luke records it as an extraordinary moment of surrender. If the Son of God found it necessary to pray before moving, what does that say about our need to do the same? Prayer is not evidence of weakness or worry. It is evidence of dependence. When you pray before you proceed, you are not admitting that you do not know anything. You are acknowledging that God knows more.

Reflection: How often do you pray before major decisions compared to how often you pray after things go wrong?

Practical Application: Before your next significant decision, commit to spending dedicated time in prayer before you take any action.

Day 5: God Can Redeem What You Did Not Pray Through

Reading: Romans 8:28; Psalm 25:4-5

Devotional: Israel made a covenant they never should have made because they moved without God. And yet, God did not abandon them. He did not erase their story or disqualify their calling. He continued to work in and through them. Romans 8:28 does not promise that every decision we make is good. It promises that God works for the good of those who love him even through the decisions that were not good. This is not a license to be careless. It is an invitation to trust God's ability to redeem what your haste may have complicated. If you have made moves

without God, return to him. Ask him to order your steps from this point forward. His mercies are new every morning.

Reflection: Is there a decision you made without God that you have been carrying with shame or regret? How might God be working even through that situation?

Practical Application: Write down one past decision you wish you had prayed through more carefully. Then write a prayer surrendering that situation to God and asking him to bring good out of it according to his promise in Romans 8:28.

DON'T MOVE WITHOUT GOD!

JOSHUA 9:14-15

DR. DARRYL T. CANADY

10.4.26

Small Group Guide: "Don't Move Without God"

Based on Joshua 9:14-15

Overview

This week's sermon drew from the account of Israel's encounter with the Gibeonites to teach a foundational principle for every believer: we must seek God before we act. Israel examined the evidence in front of them, skipped the step of prayer, and entered an agreement they never should have made. The consequences lasted far beyond the moment of the decision. This guide will help your group reflect on what it means to truly inquire of the Lord before moving forward in life's decisions.

Key Takeaways

- Appearance is not always reality. What looks right, feels right, and seems to add up can still lead you in the wrong direction.
- Skipping prayer does not mean God is absent. It means we have chosen to exclude Him from our process.
- There is a critical difference between a good idea and a God idea, between an open door and an assigned door.
- Prayer on the front end can save you pain on the back end.
- A bad decision does not have to become the end of your destiny. God can work through our mistakes, but that does not mean our mistakes were His will.
- Waiting on God is not wasting time. It is giving God time to lead us.

Opening Activity

Before diving into discussion, take two to three minutes for each group member to silently reflect on this question: Think of a significant decision you made in the last year. At what point in that process did you pray about it?

You do not need to share your answer yet. Simply sit with it as the group begins to discuss.

Discussion Questions

Section 1: The Evidence They Examined

The Israelites evaluated the Gibeonites based solely on what they could see -- stale bread, worn sandals, and a convincing story. The evidence seemed to confirm everything the Gibeonites claimed.

1. Can you think of a time when something looked completely right but turned out to be wrong? What did that experience teach you about trusting appearances?
2. The sermon referenced Proverbs 14:12, which warns that a way can appear right and still lead to destruction. How do you personally guard against being misled by appearances in your decision-making?
3. The pastor made a distinction between eyesight and insight, between information and discernment. What does it look like practically to seek discernment rather than just information when you are facing a decision?
4. The sermon cautioned that experience can become dangerous when it convinces you that you no longer need to inquire of God. Have you ever seen this happen -- in your own life or in someone else's? How do you keep experience from replacing dependence on God?

Section 2: The Inquiry They Excluded

The most sobering phrase in the passage is this: "but did not inquire of the Lord." God was available. God was not hiding. They simply did not ask.

5. The pastor said: "I wonder how many times we blame God for decisions that we never included God in to begin with." How does that statement challenge the way you think about unanswered prayer or difficult circumstances?
 6. There is a difference between seeking God's guidance and seeking God's confirmation of a decision you have already made. How can you tell the difference in your own prayer life? Which one do you find yourself doing more often?
 7. The sermon pointed out that Jesus -- God in the flesh -- still prayed before major decisions. Luke 6:12-13 describes Jesus spending an entire night in prayer before choosing the twelve disciples. What does that tell you about the role of prayer in your own decision-making?
 8. The pastor said: "Sometimes we don't inquire because we don't want God's answer." Is there a decision you are currently facing where you might be avoiding prayer because you are afraid of what God might say? How do you move forward honestly in that tension?
-

Section 3: The Agreement They Entered

Because Israel moved without praying, they entered a covenant they could not undo. Three days later, they discovered the truth -- but by then, it was too late to walk away.

9. The sermon stated: "A failure to discern can become a commitment that you have to live with." What does this truth make you think about the decisions currently in front of you?

10. Have you ever had a "three days later" moment -- a time when you discovered after a decision what you wish you had known before it? Without going into painful detail, what did that experience teach you about the importance of seeking God first?
11. The pastor said: "Don't make a permanent decision based on temporary information." What safeguards can you put in place in your own life to slow down and seek God before committing to something significant?
12. Romans 8:28 reminds us that God works all things together for good for those who love him. The sermon was careful to point out that this does not mean our mistakes were God's will -- only that God is gracious enough to work through them. How does that distinction change the way you think about past decisions you regret?

Practical Applications

Choose one or more of the following to practice individually or as a group before your next meeting.

The Pause Practice: Identify one decision you are currently facing -- large or small. Before taking any action this week, commit to spending intentional time in prayer specifically asking God for direction, not confirmation of what you have already decided.

The Inquiry Journal: For the next seven days, keep a simple log. Each morning, write down one area of your life where you need God's guidance. Each evening, write down whether you sought him about it or moved on your own. Review it at the end of the week.

The Accountability Conversation: Find one person in your group or in your life who will ask you regularly, "Did you pray about that?" Give them permission to ask that question before you make significant moves. The pastor mentioned that he had people in his life who consistently asked him, "Is that God or is that you?" Consider who plays that role for you.

The Order My Steps Prayer: Use the lyrics from the song referenced in the sermon as a guide for your personal prayer time this week. Bring specific decisions, relationships, and responsibilities before God and ask him to order your steps in each one.

Closing Reflection

The sermon closed with an invitation for every person to ask God to order their steps. Before your group closes in prayer, take a moment for each member to answer this question aloud in one or two sentences:

What is one area of your life where you want to stop moving without God?

Closing Prayer

Close your time together by praying specifically for each person's answer to the reflection question above. Ask God to give your group the discipline to inquire before they act, the patience to wait for his direction, and the trust to follow where he leads even when it is not the direction they expected.

Memory Verse for the Week

Proverbs 3:5-6 -- Trust in the Lord completely rather than leaning on your own understanding. Acknowledge him in every area of your life, and he will direct your path.

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. The sermon warns that 'everything that looks right ain't right' -- in what areas of your life are you most tempted to rely on appearances rather than seeking God's discernment?
2. The pastor draws a distinction between a 'good idea' and a 'God idea' -- how do you personally discern the difference, and can you think of a time when you mistook one for the other?
3. Israel had a history of God's faithfulness at the Jordan, Jericho, and Ai, yet they still failed to inquire of God at Gibeon -- why do you think past experiences of God's guidance do not automatically protect us from making decisions without Him?
4. The sermon suggests that sometimes we avoid praying because we are afraid God will say no -- how does fear of God's answer reveal something about our level of trust in His character and His plans for us?
5. The pastor warns against reducing prayer to seeking confirmation rather than genuine guidance -- how honest are you with yourself about whether you are truly inquiring of God or simply asking Him to validate decisions you have already made?

6. Proverbs 3:5-6 instructs us to trust God with all our heart and not lean on our own understanding -- how do experience, education, and expertise sometimes become obstacles to dependence on God rather than tools submitted to Him?
7. The sermon points out that even Jesus, who had all power, regularly withdrew to pray before major decisions -- what does this reveal about the relationship between prayer and humility, and what does your own prayer life say about your humility before God?
8. The pastor states that 'prayer on the front end can save you pain on the back end' -- reflecting on a difficult situation in your life, how might the outcome have been different if you had sought God more intentionally before moving forward?
9. The sermon acknowledges that God can work through our mistakes without those mistakes being His will, as referenced in Romans 8:28 -- how do you hold together the grace of God working through your failures while still taking responsibility for decisions made without seeking Him?
10. The song 'Order My Steps' is woven throughout the conclusion of the sermon as a prayer of surrender -- what would it practically look like in your daily life to consistently invite God to order your steps before you make decisions, both large and small?