



enemy tactics

TEACHING SUMMARY

The sun had barely risen over the hills of Canaan when the news traveled fast. Jericho had fallen. Ai had been taken. The God of Israel was fighting for His people, and the surrounding nations took notice. Kings from the hill country, the lowland, and the coast gathered their forces. They set aside old rivalries and formed one army because the enemy of my enemy had become their friend.

Yet not everyone prepared for battle with swords. Some chose a different path. From the city of Gibeon, a group of men set out on a long journey. They wore old, patched clothes and carried dry, crumbly bread and worn-out sandals. Their donkeys bore sacks that looked as if they had traveled many miles. These men walked eighteen miles to reach Gilgal, where Joshua and the Israelites had set up camp.

When they arrived, they stood before Joshua and said, "We have come from a distant country. Make a treaty with us." Joshua felt something stir inside him. His spirit sent up warnings. He asked them directly, "Who are you, and where do you come from?" They answered with a carefully prepared story. They spoke of hearing about the Lord's significant acts in Egypt and beyond the Jordan. They mentioned nothing of Jericho or Ai, because if they truly came from far away, how would they know of those recent victories? They presented themselves as humble travelers seeking peace.

Joshua and the leaders listened. They examined the worn provisions and the old clothes. Everything looked convincing. Yet in that moment, they made a choice. They trusted what their eyes could see instead of asking the Lord for counsel. They forgot the fresh sting of their recent failure at Ai. They did not seek the Commander of the Lord's army. Instead, they made a treaty and swore an oath to let these people live.

Three days later, the truth came out. The Gibeonites lived in the land's heart, only a short distance away. They were not weak wanderers. Gibeon was a large, fortified city, nearly as strong as Jericho, with powerful defenses, a massive water system, and stores that could sustain a long siege. It led a network of allied cities, thousands of people bound by protection and power. Joshua had thought he was bound himself to one small group. Instead, he found himself tied to a regional stronghold.

The Israelites grumbled, but the leaders honored the oath they had sworn before the Lord. The Gibeonites would live, yet they would serve as woodcutters and water carriers for the house of God. They were not welcomed as family, like Rahab had been. They were bound as servants. The compromise remained in the camp.

This story sits right at the beginning of the conquest for a reason. God wanted Israel, and He wants us, to learn that we inherit the promised land only through obedience and trust in His commands. The spirit-filled life does not shield us from every trouble. We are still being shaped. We still stumble and sin. We still have days when we choose our own way. Yet every failure carries a lesson if we will listen.

In the spirit-filled life, we face three great opponents: the world, the flesh, and the enemy himself. Jericho showed the power of the world's strongholds. Ai exposed the danger of our own flesh when we act in pride. Gibeon reveals the cunning work of the enemy, who prefers deception over open battle.

The enemy cannot destroy those who belong to Christ. His defeat is certain. So he turns to other methods. He comes not always as a roaring lion but often dressed in the clothes of a friend.

He uses deceiving appearances. He wraps his lies in things that look reasonable and even spiritual. He once appeared in the garden as a crafty serpent after being a beautiful cherub in God's presence. He still disguises himself as an angel of light. We stand against this by testing every spirit and every message against the clear Word of God. We do not accept what looks good on the surface. We take up the sword of the Spirit and examine it carefully.

He distorts truth. The Gibeonites knew the commands in Deuteronomy. They twisted that knowledge to create a loophole for themselves. The enemy quoted Scripture to Jesus in the wilderness. He mixes partial truths with lies to lead us off course. We guard our hearts by searching the full counsel of Scripture, not isolated verses. Like the Bereans, we examine everything daily to see if it lines up with God's Word.

He creates urgency. The Gibeonites pressed for an immediate decision. They made it feel as if a delay would bring disaster. The pressure caused Joshua to act before he prayed. The enemy still pushes us toward hasty choices. We resist by refusing to run ahead of the Lord. We pause. We pray. We wait for His direction, remembering that the steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.

He seeks disguised coexistence. He does not always attack outright. Sometimes he asks only to live among us as a harmless neighbor. He plants counterfeits right in the middle of God's field. One small compromise rarely stays alone. It brings friends. It creates alliances that bind us later. God calls us to remove every inhabitant from the land He has given. We make no treaties with sin. We ask the Lord for wisdom, and we take every thought captive to obey Christ.

Joshua learned this the hard way. He ignored the warnings in his spirit. He relied on sight instead of faith. He failed to check in with the Lord. Yet even in the mistake, God remained faithful. The Gibeonites still served the house of God. Mercy worked even through failure.

Let us keep our eyes on Jesus, the Commander of our salvation. Let us stay alert. Let us seek His counsel in all things. The land is ours to inherit, but we take it one obedient step at a time, trusting fully in the One who fights for us.