

TRUSTWORTHY

JEREMIAH 42:1-43:3

(Prepared by Gene Thompson using LifeWay's ETB materials.)

1. What was the last major decision you had to make?
2. Did you consult God on the issue?
3. How often do you make your own plans and then ask God to bless them?
4. What is the difference between seeking God's will and asking God to bless your will? (You have already made up your mind and are hoping God will see it your way.)

When we face decisions, large or small, we know we should seek and do God's will. However, if we are honest with ourselves, we will admit that sometimes we give the impression we are seeking God's will, when actually we are seeking divine approval for what we have already decided to do, or we are seeking God's blessings for the decisions we have already made.

5. What do you do to seek God's will during those times? (Read the Bible to see if God had a word for you; pray; ask others to pray to God for you; cleanse your life of any sin; ask someone's advice on what to do; etc.)

Today's text is after the Babylonians had destroyed Jerusalem and taken captive all the powerful and able-bodied Israelites. They left behind only the poor, old, and weak Israelites. The Babylonian government had appointed Gedaliah as governor over the remaining refugees. From nearby hills refugees began to emerge from hiding places and gather together. Not long after that, Gedaliah and most of the government, including Babylonian soldiers, were assassinated by a Judean guerilla band led by Ishmael. Fearing retaliation from Nebuchadnezzar for killing his appointed governor and soldiers, the remaining Judean refugees under the leadership of some guerilla bands made plans to flee to Egypt. In a panic they sought the Lord's guidance.

SEEKING GOD'S WILL! Read Jeremiah 42:1-6

1. What were the people, led by Johanan and Jezaniah, asking Jeremiah to do? (Should we indeed go to Egypt like we are planning to do?)
2. When they came to Jeremiah who did they ask him to pray to? (The LORD YOUR GOD! As if He wasn't "their" God!)
3. What did the people say they would do when God answered Jeremiah's prayer? (They pledged to do whatever God told them, no matter how difficult.)

However, in Jeremiah 41:17-18 they had already decided to go to Egypt. Although they didn't say it, their intent may have been simply to get God's blessings on their plans.

4. What do you think causes a disconnect between people's verbal affirmation of the Bible as God's Word and their failure to follow God's commands? (I believe it is simple FAITH! It is the substance of things not seen—Hebrews 11:1. We are far too dependent on what we can see and faith is based on what we cannot see.)

It boils down to this: Do I believe what I can see or what God says that I can't see!

The people of Judah feared Nebuchadnezzar and the power he held over them. God wanted His people to trust Him, not fear Nebuchadnezzar. It is remarkable that they had seen Jeremiah's prophecies fulfilled but they still didn't believe!

OPTION 1! Read Jeremiah 42:7-12

1. Why do you think God waited ten days to answer Jeremiah? (Jeremiah took seriously that he really needed to seek what God had to say. He waited for a word from the Lord, not just his own opinion.)

2. How long do we need to wait for God? (Until He is gracious and gives us an answer. Waiting may be one of the biggest shortcomings of Christians in the “microwave” generation: we don’t really “wait for the Lord.”)
3. What was God’s response to the people? (Stay where you are.)
4. What promises did God give them if they would stay in the land? (He would rebuild the nation, plant them firmly in the land, be with them and save them from Babylonian power, and be merciful to you by making him kind to you.)
5. How would you expect them to respond?
6. How would you respond to those kinds of promises in your decision making, even though it was not the decision you preferred?

When we seek the Lord’s guidance, we need to be open to a response from Him that might be contrary to our plans. The way we respond to a disappointing answer reveals the extent of our trust in God.

7. How does fear cause a person to question their beliefs and confidence in God? (We fear when we look at our circumstances and think there is no way God can fix this.)

OPTION 2! Read Jeremiah 42:13-18

Their second option was to disobey God and go to Egypt.

1. What did God say would happen to them if they went to Egypt? (The very things they feared in Judah would come upon them in Egypt and all would die.)

It was very ironic. The things they were afraid would happen if they OBEY God, would actually happen if they DISOBEY God and did what they wanted to do themselves.

2. Why might a person choose to run away from what God has commanded? (It doesn’t make sense.)
—For example: We think: if I tithe, I won’t have enough money. I can’t possibly give 10% of my income to God. But actually the reverse is true: if you tithe, God will provide and you will be ok. But if you do NOT tithe, then the thing you are worried about, will happen: we will not have enough. But it won’t happen if you OBEY God, but because you DISOBEY Him.
3. When have you faced a choice that didn’t make sense from a human perspective?
4. Which path did you take in that circumstance?

The people heard the consequences of disobedience described. Even more, they had witnessed firsthand where disobedience could lead them. Yet they still considered ignoring God’s directions and trusting in their own plans.

WARNED! Read Jeremiah 42:19-22

It is almost as if they were packing as Jeremiah was talking.

1. Why would someone ask for God’s counsel and then ignore it? (They were simply looking for God’s stamp of approval on their plans, and never intended to do otherwise.)
2. What does it reveal about people’s hearts if they reject God’s plans despite knowing about God’s faithfulness to His promises? (It is cold and rebellious.)

In Hebrew, Jeremiah appears to be pleading with them more than commanding them, demonstrating his love and concern for his people to obey the Lord and be blessed.

3. Why does trusting in our own plans and judgment ultimately lead to destruction? (Jeremiah 17:9—
“The heart is more deceitful than anything else, and incurable—who can understand it?” To tell a person to follow their heart is not good advice!)

THE FOOLISH RESPONSE! Read Jeremiah 43:1-3

1. Have you or someone you know ever asked for advice—but already had their mind made up as to what they wanted to do?

2. So what was the people's response to Jeremiah's message from God? (They refused to do what God said.)
3. Don't we do the same kind of thing today? (We know what God wants us to do, but we don't do it!) We find ourselves like these men, "arrogant" and "proud."

SUMMARY AND CHALLENGE!

In Psalm 19:13 David is asking God to keep him from a number of sins, and among them he prays: "Also keep back Your servant from presumptuous sins; let them not rule over me."—Psalm 19:13. The word "presumptuous" there is the same Hebrew word used here of the "arrogant" men who rejected God's word through Jeremiah.

We should pray as David: "Lord, keep me from presumptuous sins." Keep me from being arrogant, and rejecting Your word.

May we humbly listen to You and DO what You show us to do!