



Mis-read Intentions.

We have all likely been in a position of misreading the intentions of another individual or organization at some point in our life. Our judgement, based on our personal or corporate values create the lens to which we measure the intentions of others. Often, without a complete picture of one's intentions the resulting judgement results in friction or conflict between people or organizations.

Part way through Joshua chapter 22 we have recorded for us the account of Joshua sending off the Eastern tribes to their home on their side of the Jordan River. This portion of land was what they asked for based on its physical qualities to support their livestock and families. (Numbers 32). On their way home they built an altar to be a witness between them and the rest of the nation, so future generations would know that they belonged to a nation who feared the Lord.

Initially, the actions of the two and a half tribes (the Reubenites, the Gadites and half tribe of Manasseh) was misread as a departure from faith in God. Seen as a rebellion against God the Israelites prepared to wage war against them but first sent a delegation of men ahead to "clear the air" about their intentions. The nation of Israel was in fear because of past sins, past experiences where the Lord had dealt with them accordingly. They were concerned that the actions of the two and a half tribes would mean punishment for the whole nation. When confronted by the delegation, the two and a half tribes were able to explain their true intentions, finding favor with them and effectively avoiding a civil war.

Given the history that the nation of Israel had experienced with past sin and its resulting actions I can see why they

reacted the way they did; they did not want to see history repeat itself once again.

This passage lays down some important foundations for understanding how we can work effectively to avoid undue conflict through misunderstanding. The wisest man to ever live once said "He who answers a matter before he hears it, it is folly and shame to him" (Proverbs 18:12 NKJV) Phinehas, the son of the high priest, the one who led the delegation of men who confronted the tribes heeded these words well. His first action was to go and meet with the leaders and begin a conversation.

Following the expression of their concerns, Phinehas and the delegation took the time to listen to their side of the story. After hearing what they had to say the delegation was able to understand that their initial understanding of their intentions was misguided. The open conversation made way for understanding. Upon their return to Canaan, they reported this news and as scripture records it, "they talked no more about going to war against them" (Joshua 22:33)

I have been guilty of jumping to false conclusions myself as I followed the path of misread intentions; conclusions I came to without fully understanding true intentions. I have also experienced the positive outcomes in following these simple and effective strategies found in Joshua 22.

Often the hardest step in understanding the truth of other's intentions is starting the much-needed conversation. What is one conversation you can be praying about today? Pray that the Lord will lead you to a place of courage to begin that conversation today.