

TODAY IN THE WORD™

A ministry of Moody Bible Institute



COURAGE FOR THE QUEST

A Study in the Book of Joshua

JULY 2020

Crossing the Border

From the President of Moody Bible Institute

"I encounter many believers who are stuck in a spiritual desert. God has set you free, but you've never crossed the border. You are not in the place God wants you to be."



Crossing a border security check point can be intimidating. On one such trip, while passing through Frankfurt, Germany, I was

asked to show my identification. The security officer flipped through the pages of my passport, shook her head sternly, and handed it back to me. "I can't let you in," she declared. "There is nowhere left to stamp." My stomach flipped. Frantically, I paged through the booklet and was relieved to discover one empty space. One little thing had almost sabotaged my trip and kept me from crossing the border.

I wonder how many of us, spiritually, are kept on this side of the border, away from where God wants us to be? I encounter many believers who are stuck in a spiritual desert. God has set you free, but you've never crossed the border. You are exhausted, anxious, failing to experience the spiritual rest that God has promised His children (Hebrews 4).

In this month's study of Joshua, the Israelites were waiting at the border of the Promised Land, the place God had prepared for them.

Free from slavery in Egypt, they followed Moses into the desert. But because of their disobedience and unbelief, the journey was long and arduous. Unwilling to trust God, they found themselves stuck in a place they didn't want to be, unable to enter the Promised Land for 40 years.

This land was the fulfillment of God's promises to His people, giving them expanded territory (Josh. 1:3, 4), victory over their opponents (v. 5), His close companionship, strength, and courage (v. 6). What was required of them? To be strong and courageous, obedient to God's Law, with a laser-focus on Him (vv. 7-9). But they were stuck; and we can get stuck also. We are often reluctant to step out in faith when God calls us, and this delayed obedience is always disobedience.

Friend, if you hear God calling you, do not harden your heart. The author of Hebrews challenges us to follow God out of the desert and into His promises: "Since the promise of entering His rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it" (Heb. 4:1). Stepping forward in faith, we can live out the truth of our salvation, follow Him in obedience, and enter His abundant rest. ■

Who Owns the Land?

by Dr. John Koessler

“We must recognize that everything we call our own ultimately belongs to God. We are merely caretakers and stewards of all the goods and gifts which God has provided.”

Readers of the book of Joshua may be troubled by his command to “take possession of the land” (Josh. 1:11). We know that others were already living in Canaan. What right did Joshua have to issue such a directive?

First, the Bible teaches that the whole earth is God’s possession. Not only does God have authority over the land, but He also exercises sovereignty over those who dwell on it. Psalm 24:1 declares, “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.” Second, the Bible makes it clear that God’s hand played a role in determining where people have settled across the globe throughout history. According to Acts 17:26, “From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth.” Third, Israel’s dispossession of the people of Canaan was both a fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham and an act of divine judgment.

The Lord made a covenant with Abraham to give the land to him and his descendants as an inheritance (Gen. 15:7, 18–19). He warned

Abraham that He would judge those already living in the land of Canaan because of their sin (Gen. 15:16). As Old Testament commentator Derek Kidner points out, Joshua’s command was an exercise of justice, not aggression. What is more, the Lord waited patiently for four generations before carrying out this threat. During that time, Abraham’s descendants were sold into slavery in Egypt. Kidner explains, “Until it was right to invade, God’s people must wait, [even if] it cost them centuries of hardship.”

Joshua led Israel into Canaan to receive their inheritance from God. Although they took possession of the land, they did not own it. They were stewards and caretakers of what belonged to God. The Israelites could not sell the land permanently (Lev. 25:23). Every fifty years, the property had to be returned to those who originally inherited it. In the same way, we must recognize that everything we call our own ultimately belongs to God. We are merely caretakers and stewards of all the goods and gifts which God has provided. ■

For Further Study

To learn more about the book of Joshua, read *Joshua: No Falling Words* by Dale Ralph Davis (Christian Focus).

We hope these questions will help you consider (or discuss with others) what God is teaching you through this month's study of His Word. We've left a bit of room to write down your thoughts as well!

WEEK 1: Do you have quests or missions coming up in the year ahead? Make a list and pray over it this month as we follow Joshua's quest.

WEEK 2: What victories has God delivered to you throughout your life? How can you remind yourself of them when times get tough?

WEEK 3: How can you become a strong and courageous leader to the people in your circle of influence?

WEEK 4: Have you declared a determination for your home, your family, or your business to "serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15)? What changes might you make to clearly show this commitment?

For additional discussion questions, see our website, todayintheword.org, or the *Today in the Word* app.

TODAY IN THE WORD™

Joshua: Courage for the Quest

Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.—Joshua 1:9

Imagine, you are on a journey to a new land. You've wandered in the desert for decades, your leader has died, and you have to fight bloody battles to claim the land you were promised. What would be the source of your strength, resilience, determination? We'll find answers in this month's study—the book of Joshua.

The people of Israel and their new leader, Joshua, could keep their courage because the Lord kept His promises. As we follow the Israelites' quest to the Promised Land—the crossing of the Jordan River, the victories at Jericho and Ai, the deception of the Gibeonites and dividing of the Land—we'll see that God was with them all the way. Through His faithfulness their mission would be accomplished.

God has a calling and a destiny for each one of us. No matter the difficulty of the quest, we can be "strong and courageous" because our faithful Lord will fulfill His promises for us, as He did for Joshua. We pray the lessons from the life of Joshua will help you:

- Be courageous and brave even in the most difficult times
- Each day, choose to align your life with God's Word
- Learn to be a strong and resilient leader

It's a joy and a privilege to study the Bible with the *Today in the Word* family. Thank you for your friendship, support, and prayers for this ministry. ■

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Beginning Again

Read Deuteronomy 34:1–12

*Teach me to do your will, for you are my God;
may your good Spirit lead me on level ground.—Psalm 143:10*

If you were asked to name a famous basketball player, Michael Jordan might immediately come to mind. Jordan helped the Chicago Bulls claim 6 championships in 8 years and become one of the greatest basketball dynasties of all time. In 1998, Jordan decided it was time to step down. Then head coach, Phil Jackson, departed, and other players were traded or resigned. For the Bulls, it was the end of an era.

The conclusion of Deuteronomy marks the end of an era for God's people. Moses had successfully led the Jewish people out of Egyptian captivity, across treacherous deserts, and to the Promised Land. However, The Lord prohibited Moses to enter, and he died in Moab (v. 5). The end of Moses' leadership must have been a gut-punch to the Israelites. After the appropriate time of mourning (v. 8), they were ready to fulfill their God-given destiny and enter the Promised Land, but who would lead them? While the answer may have been unclear to them, God knew who

would continue their quest. Joshua was filled with "the spirit of wisdom" which was passed down from his mentor (v. 9). He was now qualified to govern the people because he had been chosen by Moses through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Lord would continue to be with His people and with Joshua, just as He had been with Moses.

This must have been an exhilarating, yet unsettling time for the Israelites. They stood on the banks of the Jordan waiting and watching. The other side was uncharted territory. They had made it to the edge of the Promised Land, but how would they go forward? Would their new leader be up for the quest?

► Have you ever had to continue on after your beloved boss, pastor, or co-worker retired? Sometimes the Lord places us in predicaments we are unsure if we can handle. We invite you to journey with us through the amazing and exhilarating quest found in the book of Joshua.

Pray with Us

As we follow the Israelites' quest to reach the Promised Land, we pray that the Lord will show us what we need to take away from the book of Joshua this month.

A Confident Young Spy

Read Numbers 14:1–9

If the LORD is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land.—Numbers 14:8

We first meet Joshua as a young spy. Moses sent Joshua and 11 other leaders, each one from his ancestral tribe, to explore the land of Canaan. But their report back left everyone in dismay. Powerful warriors occupied the land, and fear swept from tent to tent as the people cried: “If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this wilderness! Why is the LORD bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword?” (vv. 2–3). They even suggested leaving Moses, choosing a new leader, and returning to slavery in Egypt.

Would their journey be all for nothing: the miracles performed, the miles trekked, and the desert obstacles overcome? Then, while the whole assembly watched, a young spy and his friend spoke up offering a different and godly perspective. Joshua and Caleb pled with the people that the land they explored, an “exceedingly good” land, could be theirs because the Lord would be with them (vv. 7–9).

Joshua’s and Caleb’s confidence could only come from the Lord. It

probably took as much courage to raise their voices against their family and friends as was needed to scout out the land. Nonetheless, they spoke truth because they were confident that the Lord was bringing them on their quest for a purpose.

More time would pass before the people were fully prepared to enter into the Promised Land, but young Joshua and Caleb stood their ground when everyone else was ready to walk away. Joshua’s confidence in the Lord is one of the many reasons why Moses would mentor him and the Lord chose him to be the people’s leader for the most challenging quest they ever faced, entering into the Promised Land.

► If you were in Joshua’s sandals what would you have done? Would you have the courage to speak up for what was right and godly? Standing up for what is right may be challenging because of what others will think or say. But true confidence comes from the Lord.

Pray with Us

In today’s reading, Joshua and Caleb give us an inspiring example of courage and reliance on God. May we stay strong and faithful to the Lord even in the most adverse circumstances.

Be Strong and Courageous

Read Joshua 1:1–9

Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.—Joshua 1:7

Imagine you heard on the evening news that a band of nomads was attempting to take over a fortified city. Nobody would think they stood a chance, especially if their experienced leader had just died. As Joshua led the Israelites into the Promised Land, it wasn't just them against the world. We know that God was with them every step of the way (vv. 6, 9).

Nevertheless, their journey would not be easy. That is why three times in today's passage, you read the phrase "be strong and courageous" (vv. 6, 7, 9). It doesn't seem like Joshua lacked confidence. After all, he had volunteered to be a spy, and raised his hand when everyone wanted to turn back. Moses even handpicked the young man to be his personal aide. Rather, the Lord knew that the quest Joshua and the Israelites were about to embark on was going to be challenging physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Not only would it take all of their might, resilience, and composure, it would take all of their courage.

The key to success for Joshua and the Israelites came not from strength and courage but from a relationship with the God whose laws and commandments went with them wherever they roamed. The Law taught God's people how to live righteously in obedience to Him. It also showed them their need for God's grace and forgiveness. Unlike the barbaric and vicious living of their contemporaries, God called His people to be different. Their quest was tough. The road was long. Would they be able to find God's power to be strong and courageous? Stay tuned.

► Finding strength and courage in difficult situations does not always come from within. Rather, it comes from finding God even in the midst of your circumstances. God promises to give you the strength you need. What situation are you facing today? The courage you need is there for asking!

Pray with Us

Are you going through difficulties right now? Today's passage shows us that to endure, we need to find God in the midst of trials. Ask Him to give you the strength you need.

Stand United

Read Joshua 1:10–18

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.—Ephesians 4:3

Where did we get the phrase “United we stand, divided we fall”? The concept is a biblical one (Mark 3:25), but the phrase was penned in 1768 by John Dickinson, one of the Founding Fathers of the United States of America. In “The Liberty Song” Dickinson expressed the magnitude of the quest for the young nation and the importance of unity and collaboration: “Then join hand in hand, brave Americans all! By uniting we stand, by dividing we fall!”

In today’s passage Joshua and his officers were preparing the people to gather supplies for their quest. In a few days they would cross the Jordan River and attempt to take possession of the Promised Land which the Lord was giving them (vv. 10–11). This involved not just one person, but everyone. In verse 11, Joshua used the second person pronoun five times. Every single person needed to be on board for this treacherous campaign. In verses 12 to 16, Joshua stresses the value of unity with those who had already received their inheritance

east of the Jordan. The Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh had no compelling reason to leave their families or risk their lives. However, they could not sit on the sidelines while their neighbors went off to battle. This was a testimony to the Jewish value of companionship. German theologian Otto Eissfeldt observed, “To Israelite thought, unity is prior to diversity, the community is prior to the individual.”

The tribes’ response (vv. 16–18) demonstrated that they were loyal to Moses, faithful to one another, but more importantly, they were devoted to God. Did God need them to fight His battles? No. Were their lives more purposeful, complete, and honoring to the Lord because of their willingness to stand with their neighbors? Absolutely!

► Today we celebrate the U.S. Independence Day. We remember the courage and unity of those who fought to establish this nation. How can we promote a commitment to unity within the body of Christ?

Pray with Us

Let’s pray according to the apostle Paul’s exhortation in today’s key verse to “keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” May we strengthen our unity with fellow believers!

No Turning Back

Read Joshua 2:1–14

*For the LORD your God is God in heaven above
and on the earth below.—Joshua 2:11*

The day after the signing of the Declaration of Independence must have been a surreal moment for the Founding Fathers. They knew the real battle had only begun. There was no turning back. And in our text today, there was no turning back for Joshua and the Israelites. In his first move as the nation's leader, Joshua sent two spies to scout out their enemies. Little did the spies know that help would come from an unlikely place.

The spies entered the land, although not undetected, and hid in the home of Rahab, a prostitute (v. 1). We will look at Rahab's life more closely tomorrow, but her conversation with the spies is significant. Even though they were the first Israelites to ever set foot inside the walls of Jericho, the testimony and reputation of Yahweh was clearly well known. Rahab stated that the hearts of her entire country had "melted in fear" when they heard of what

happened in Egypt and to Sihon and Og (v. 11). This phrase refers to one who is utterly distressed with fear and anxiety. Israel's God had a powerful reputation!

Even though Rahab was an outsider and knew very little about their history, she confessed her belief that their God was indeed the one true God (v. 11). She agreed to shelter the spies in exchange for her security and the safety of her family (v. 13). What bravery they all showed at the start of this quest: not just Joshua and the spies, but Rahab too. There was no turning back. They would be okay if they were on God's side.

► You are probably inspired when you hear about God working in the lives of others. God works in people's lives so that His name and renown will be widespread and glorified. Today, tell someone—or share on social media—about a way God has worked in your life.

Pray with Us

The story of Rahab in today's reading gives us a glimpse into God's guidance in people's lives. Remember, the same God is sovereign in your life! Praise Him for His love, grace, and mercy.

A Scarlet Rope

Read Joshua 2:15–24

By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.—Hebrews 11:31

In Nathaniel Hawthorne’s classic, *The Scarlet Letter*, Hester Prynne was required to wear a scarlet “A” to signify her shame for having a baby out of wedlock. Humiliation and social stigmatizing were thought to be an appropriate punishment for a woman who committed adultery. If this had taken place in Joshua’s time, Rahab might have been forced to wear a scarlet letter as well. She was the town’s prostitute, the infamous adulteress of Jericho.

But the Israelite spies believed her place would be the perfect hideout. What happened next would change the trajectory of her life. In our text today, perhaps for the first time in her life, Rahab became a hero. She saved the spies and, in due time, her family as well. Rahab agreed not to say a word about the spies and to tie a scarlet cord, or rope, outside the window where she let the men down (v. 18). This way, when they returned, they would know which home to spare from destruction.

It must have taken tremendous courage for Rahab to let the spies leave. If the Jericho king and his men discovered her betrayal, Rahab would most likely have been tortured and murdered. Nonetheless, she kept her promise and did everything just as they agreed. Perhaps she was searching not just for a way out of Jericho, but a way out of her old way of living. Rahab’s brave act is remembered by the author of Hebrews, in the passage often referred to as the Hall of Faith (Heb. 11:31). As she obediently tied that scarlet rope (Josh. 2:21), her faith triumphed over her fear. God used that scarlet rope as a symbol of faith.

► Have you ever been given a label? Maybe you’ve been called slow, failure, old, or even a mistake? No matter what label people have given you, God calls you *loved*. He sees your faith. You are His child. He replaces the world’s false labels with the new identity He alone can give (1 John 3:1).

Pray with Us

As we continue to read Rahab’s story, we see a woman at the bottom of the social hierarchy becoming a hero for God. Ask the Lord to show you how you can be a hero of faith no matter what.

God Is Still With Us

Read Joshua 3:1–17

I am with you as I was with Moses.—Joshua 3:7

A leadership transition can be difficult. In times of uncertainty, a myriad of questions flood people's minds: *How will we make it? What will our future be like? How will our new leader treat us?* Churches and ministries can be especially challenged by the complexity of transition. But the ones who seem to thrive during those challenging times remember that the Lord is still with them.

When Moses led the Israelites through the Red Sea in Exodus 14, it was the unofficial start of their quest. In today's text, the crossing of the Jordan marks the unofficial completion of their wilderness wanderings and the beginning of their conquest of the Promised Land. A new chapter had begun for Joshua and the Israelites. And, while the location and leadership changed, the Lord and His presence remained the same.

This was an exciting and important time for God's people. Here Joshua gives instructions for this part of the journey: "Consecrate

yourself, for tomorrow the LORD will do amazing things among you" (v. 5). Verse 7 is the key verse in this chapter's narrative. The Lord said to Joshua, "Today I will begin to exalt you in the eyes of all Israel, so they may know that I am with you as I was with Moses." As they embarked on a new chapter, the Lord was still the author and protector of their lives. God would go before them, just as He had in the past.

We may have times when we wonder if God is really with us. It is possible this same thought raced through the minds of Joshua, the priests, and the Israelites. That is why the Lord reminded them that He had been with Moses and their parents and grandparents (v. 7).

► What transitions are you facing? Is your church making changes you don't agree with? Is your household becoming smaller or bigger? Perhaps you are changing jobs or neighborhoods? Whatever quest the Lord is taking you on, He is with you.

Pray with Us

Our passage from Joshua 3 reminds us of the vital importance of godly leadership. Will you pray for leaders in your church, at the workplace, and in our government?

Remember the Past

Read Joshua 4

The hand of the LORD is powerful.—Joshua 4:24

Churches and workplaces often publicize their vision or plan for the future. And, as individuals, we are encouraged to be forward-thinking. Financial advisors and health care professionals remind us to live in a way now that will benefit us in years to come. But it is also important to consider our past.

After the entire nation passed through the rocky bed of the Jordan River and landed safely on the other side, the only thing that stood in the way of the land promised to them was an all-out war (3:17; 4:1). We can imagine the warriors sharpening their swords, tightening their belts, and strategizing their combat tactics with one another. However, before the Lord instructed them to move forward, He wanted them to take a step back and remember.

A leader was selected from each of the 12 tribes. They were told to go into the dried riverbed where the priests remained with the Ark

of the Covenant, choose a large stone, and carry it back to the camp (v. 2). In Gilgal, Joshua built an altar to the Lord and declared that the stones would serve as a reminder for all the Israelites for generations to come (v. 7). When children would ask their parents the meaning and purpose of the stones, Joshua instructed them to pass on the miraculous story of their river crossing. They were to emphasize the presence of Yahweh as they stepped into their promised territory (vv. 21–24). Their mission was not only to occupy the Promised Land but also to remind their descendants that the Lord was and had been with them.

► Is there something that can remind you of God's guidance and grace in your life? Maybe it is a special necklace, a newly planted tree, a sticky note, or even a stone. Use this object as a reminder of what God has done in your life. One day, your grandkids might ask, "What does *that* mean?"

Pray with Us

Today's devotional prompts us to thank God for His guidance and grace in our lives. During your prayer time, remember specific instances of God leading you and praise Him for His care for you.

An Important Tradition

Read Joshua 5:1–12

*Keep my commands and follow them.
I am the LORD.—Leviticus 22:31*

Growing up, my family had the same meal on Christmas Day and Easter Sunday. My wife and I have chosen to continue several of our family's traditions, while creating new ones for our children. Traditions help us honor and remember the past. As this new generation of Israelites was about to enter the land they had been promised, Joshua made them pause to look back at what God had done and to honor important traditions.

Notice the connection between verses 1 and 2. After hearing about the timidity and fear of the Amorite and Canaanite kings, the Lord and Joshua commanded the Israelites to be circumcised (vv. 1–3). Verses 4 through 7 detail the rationale behind this command—“Now this is why he did so” (v. 4). The place was named Gilgal (a word which sounded like the Hebrew word for “to roll”) because the Lord told Joshua that with this important tradition He had “rolled away the reproach of Egypt” (v. 9). In the Hebrew language, this could also be translated, “removed the shame

of Egypt from you.” It had been 400 years since God promised the land to their forefathers, and 38 years since they left Egypt. The tradition of circumcision was the Lord's reminder to them that they were His covenant people. And this obedient generation would enter the land.

They could not eliminate what had happened in their past. With God's help, however, they could remove the emotional and spiritual burdens they had carried on their flight from Egypt. Verses 10–12 describe another important tradition, the Passover. The next day, they tasted food from their long-awaited Promised Land.

► Just as tradition played an important role for the nation of Israel, traditions hold an important place in our lives today. What traditions do you have that are special to you and your family? Do you have any that remind you of what the Lord has done in your life? If not, now is a great time to start a faith tradition!

Pray with Us

Our Scripture reading today shows the importance of following God's commandments and praising Him in prayer. Let's pray we will do both of these things in our own walk with Him.

The Holy Warrior

Read Joshua 5:13–15

*What message does my LORD
have for his servant?—Joshua 5:14*

Throughout history, alliances have been essential for victory. The Allies in WWII and the 32-nation coalition in the 1990s Gulf War are just two examples of how countries band together in a time of conflict. In today's reading, our hero Joshua was preparing to face off with an unexpected opponent. With sweaty hands and adrenaline pumping, he lifted his sword and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?" (v. 13).

The warrior instead gave an alternative answer: "Neither" (v. 14). And then, the mysterious figure revealed his true identity and reason for stopping Joshua; he was a "commander of the army of the LORD" (v. 14). Immediately, Joshua fell face down in reverence and respect. He did not know who this warrior was, but he recognized that whoever he was, he was sent from the Lord. Joshua revealed his own identity and instead of referring to himself as the "Successor of Moses" or "Leader of the Israelites" he identifies himself as the Lord's "servant" (v. 14) Then he

asked what message this commander was bringing.

The commander replied with a request that may seem odd to modern readers. He asked Joshua to remove his sandals, which represented his humanity and contact with a "filthy" world. The place he was standing was set apart by God and holy (v. 15). Because Joshua knew about Moses' encounters with Yahweh (see Ex. 3:4–6), he would have been aware that the man standing before him was none other than the same one who appeared to Moses in the burning bush. Both leaders, chosen by God, had a similar experience. The text concludes simply, "And Joshua did so" (v. 15). He was in total submission to the Lord.

► It is probably unlikely that the Commander of the Lord's army will stop you in your tracks today. However, his question should probe our hearts. Instead of asking if God is on our side, we should ask, "Are we on God's side?"

Pray with Us

Lord, we thank you for today's devotional that shows us the qualities of a true warrior for God! Give us wisdom and determination to follow you wherever you lead us.

The Walls Tumbled Down

Read Joshua 6

See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands.—Joshua 6:2

I remember learning about the battle of Jericho as a child in Sunday School. I don't recall if the story was told using a video, felt board, or reenactment, but I do remember thinking, "How could this be possible?" While I believed God was capable of performing miracles and that the fortified walls of Jericho were no problem for Him, I thought there must be something I was missing. How did simply walking around walls make them crumble?

At the time I thought that the actions of Joshua and the Israelites appeased the Lord and, as a direct result, the walls tumbled down. What seems obvious now, the crucial point I clearly missed as a child, is found in the very first words the Lord spoke to Joshua, "See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands" (v. 2). The Israelites' obedience to Yahweh's commands was not to earn God's favor or His help. Rather, it would show their obedience *because* Yahweh already

showed them favor and had delivered Jericho into their hands.

We can imagine there may have been some of that same skepticism in the minds of some Israelites, as they walked around the walls for a week. They had witnessed the Lord's power over the waters of the Jordan River. They had tasted the Lord's miracles in the harsh elements in the desert. However, now they were going up against mighty warriors. Surely, doubt had crept in, but not for Joshua. He was assured that the city was theirs because they were on God's side. All that was required of him was to "see" (v. 2). Jericho was *already* delivered.

► So often we forget that God has already declared us victors. Instead, we fix our minds on our obstacles. We feel they are too big or strong for us to defeat. When we are on God's side, no wall is too tall, no quest is too difficult. Today, ask God to help you see every obstacle through His perspective.

Pray with Us

During your prayer time, ask yourself: Am I on God's side? Do I see obstacles in my life from God's perspective? What the Lord did for Joshua, He can do for you. The walls of your "Jericho" will fall!

Saved from Destruction

Read Joshua 6:17–25

This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.—1 Timothy 2:3, 4

Imagine the bedlam that occurred after the walls of Jericho came tumbling down. As bricks crumbled and dust clouded the air, the Israelite army rushed into the city. The enemies fled for their lives as Jericho was overtaken. Rahab and her family were in hiding, probably clinging together in fear as they awaited their fate.

Although today's reading is part of yesterday's text, this narrative deserves a closer look. We encountered Rahab a few chapters ago when we read how she heroically sheltered the Israelite spies. After Rahab revealed her faith in the God "over heaven above and earth below" (2:11), she made a deal to be spared Jericho's inevitable doom. She helped the spies escape and now it was their turn. Would they honor their agreement?

Joshua ordered that everything inside the city would now be devoted to the Lord (v. 17). The Hebrew word for "devoted" used here refers to the irrevocable giving to the Lord by total destruction. But Joshua also honored

the promises made to Rahab and her family. This act of mercy displayed Joshua's commitment to justice and revealed the Lord's character. The lives of Rahab and her family were spared because God always fulfills His promises.

Rahab's story has a parallel to the gospel. We are taught in the New Testament, that God desires every person to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4). Just as God did not reject Rahab because of her past failures, the Lord receives all who surrender their lives to Him. The same mercy given to Rahab has been offered to us as well. Because of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and victory over the grave, we are able to be saved from inevitable destruction. God saves all who trust in Him.

► God knows your story . . . all of it. Despite your imperfections, He loves you and wants you to be part of His family. Through Jesus, He made a way for that to be possible. Surrender your life to Him, today! It is a life-changing decision that only you can make.

Pray with Us

Let's ask the Father to help us grow in our love for Him and for each other. Let us also thank Jesus for His salvation that brought us into His family of faith.

The Sin Within

Read Joshua 7:1–19

*Give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel,
and honor him.—Joshua 7:19*

Joy filled the air. The Israelites were swapping stories about the destruction of Jericho when they received awful news. The nearly 3,000 men who had been sent to overtake the city of Ai had been routed. This had to be a stunning turnaround for the recent victors. After what God had done in Jericho and the promising reports from the spies, the capture of Ai seemed like it would be a walk in the park for the Israelite army.

This particular conquest ended with them running for their lives and around three dozen killed (vv. 3–5). Joshua and the other leaders were beside themselves (v. 6). Joshua questioned the Lord’s motives, promises, and actions (vv. 7–8). He concluded his “blame game” by putting the ball in God’s court and in verse 9 essentially asks, “What are you going to do about it?” The Lord refused to play Joshua’s game. He bluntly tells Joshua, “Stand up! What are you doing down on your face?”

(v. 10). He explains that it was Israel who had broken their side of the covenant. Then He gave Joshua and the Israelites an ultimatum: Remove what was supposed to be destroyed. “I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy whatever among you is devoted to destruction” (v. 12).

The Lord does not say that just one person had sinned, but the entire nation (vv. 1, 11). While it is clear that one man, Achan, had disobeyed, the Lord was teaching a hard and valuable lesson. One person’s disobedience can have devastating consequences. The Lord ordered Joshua to weed out the sin from within, so the whole nation would not be infested.

► The sin of one person affected the lives of many. It is naïve to think that we alone will be affected by our sinful actions. My sin and yours affects those around us. If there is unconfessed sin in your life, confess it today, and with strength from the Holy Spirit, remove it completely.

Pray with Us

Today’s Scripture is a somber reminder of the destructiveness of sin. The sin of one person affects many. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you if there’s sin in your life and to give you courage to confess it.

The Consequence of Evil

Read Joshua 7:20–26

*But who can discern their own errors?
Forgive my hidden faults.—Psalm 19:12*

Sherlock Holmes was famous for solving mysteries. The fictional character first appeared in 1887, created by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. The hero used his acute observation skills to solve difficult crime cases. In today's reading, Joshua had a mystery to solve. Who had stolen the devoted items from Jericho?

Achan admitted that he had taken the spoils of battles and confessed his actions. Joshua then confirmed Achan's guilt by locating the stolen goods (v. 22) and bringing everyone to the Valley of Achor (v. 24). Joshua's question in verse 25 brought insight into the consequence that would take place. Achan's actions would result in his own death, and the deaths of his family. Many would agree that Achan deserved to be punished, but why was the penalty so brutal? In addition, why was his family included (v. 25)? It is important to remember that Achan's sin, most likely with approval from his family, cost the lives of many who died at Ai. God was teaching

His people that if Israel was going to inherit the Promised Land, they were to be fully obedient to Him. They must obey God every step of the way; there was no exception.

The actions of Achan stand in stark contrast to Rahab. In both narratives, destruction and salvation came through one person's actions. Similarly, sin and death entered into our world through one man, Adam, but salvation came solely through Jesus (Rom. 5:12–21). When we read Achan's story, it is easy to see our own sin and fate. But like Rahab, our lives are spared through God's grace.

► It is easy to read about Achan's story and think, "How could he do such an evil thing? I would never do that." But in our consumeristic world, our eyes often wander. Covetousness lurks behind every corner. We must be careful not to fall into the same trap. Honor God with your possessions and your self-restraint.

Pray with Us

Again, we come to God acknowledging that we are sinful people and we need Christ's righteousness to lead lives that are pleasing to Him. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you areas that need to change.

Questions & Answers

by Dr. Michael Rydelnik, Moody professor and host of Moody Radio's *Open Line*

Q Should followers of Jesus purchase lottery tickets?

A There is no verse in Scripture that directly prohibits gambling or playing the lottery. Perhaps a more important question centers on our motive. Virtually everyone who buys lottery tickets does so to gain wealth. This, according to Scripture, seems unwise. First, we are told to be good stewards of the money God has given us. Jesus taught that “if you have not been faithful with unrighteous money, who will trust you with what is genuine” (Luke 16:11)? Gambling is never a good investment.

Second, Scripture tells us that desiring wealth is dangerous. Paul wrote, “Those who want to be rich fall into temptation, a trap” (1 Tim. 6:9). The truth of this is evidenced by many lottery winners whose lives have been ruined as a result of winning. Third, gambling is unwise because it is unbalanced. We need to practice contentment with what the Lord has given us. For this reason, Paul reminded us that “godliness with contentment is a great gain” (1 Tim. 6:6).

Q What is the difference between the Holy Spirit and the Holy Ghost?

A Modern English translations describe the third person of the triune God as “the Holy Spirit.” However, the 1611 King James Version used the term “Holy Ghost” some 90 times and “Holy Spirit” seven times. The reason the KJV uses both terms is that it was translated by several teams and, apparently, they translated the term differently.

In the 17th century, the word *ghost* meant an immaterial being. When someone died, their immaterial part, the spirit or ghost of the deceased person, continued to live on. Maybe you’ve heard the phrase “give up the ghost,” which carries the same meaning. In modern times, the word “ghost” has come to mean an apparition. Thus, today, the better translation of the original Greek word *pneuma* is *Spirit*, not *Ghost*.

All that to say, there is no difference between the Holy Spirit and the Holy Ghost. He is the third person of the triune God, the Comforter sent by the Lord Jesus (John 14:16; 15:26; 16:7) who indwells all Jesus followers forever (John 14:17). He testifies of and glorifies the Lord Jesus, pointing to the Messiah rather than Himself (John 15:27; 16:14). The Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin, showing lost people their need for redemption through the Lord Jesus

“Scripture tells us that desiring wealth is dangerous. Paul wrote, ‘Those who want to be rich fall into temptation, a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires, which plunge people into ruin and destruction’ (1 Tim. 6:9).”

(John 16:8–11). He regenerates (Titus 3:5), indwells (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19), baptizes (1 Cor. 12:13), and seals all Jesus followers (Eph. 1:13; 4:30), assuring their security until their day of redemption.

Q Will we see God in heaven?

A Yes, believers will spend eternity with the Lord, and we will see God. The clearest verse about this is Revelation 22:3–4: “The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. *They will see his face* and his name will be on their foreheads.” However, this does not resolve the question: Which person of the triune God will we see?

Scripture consistently teaches that no person has seen or can see God the Father. Jesus taught, “God is spirit” (John 4:24), meaning He is immaterial. In John 1:18 it says no one except the Lord Jesus “has ever seen God” (see also John 6:46; 1 John 4:12). Paul described the Father as “the King eternal, immortal, *invisible*, the only God” (1 Tim. 1:17) who “dwells in unapproachable light, whom *none of mankind has seen or can see*” (1 Tim. 6:16).

God told Moses, “You cannot see my face, for no one can see me and live” (Ex. 33:20), yet afterward God allowed Moses to see His back (33:21–23). Moses did not actually see God but saw His glory (33:22). When Moses brought the elders to Mount Sinai, “they saw the God of Israel” (Ex. 24:10). But the Hebrew verb *chazah* (“saw”) generally means to see in a vision (see Num. 24:4, 16). In the same way, when Isaiah (Isaiah 6) and Daniel (Daniel 7) saw the Lord, it was in a vision.

We will see God in our forever future, but it will be God the Son, the Lord Jesus. In response to Philip’s request to show them the Father, the Lord Jesus said, “The one who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). And in Revelation 22:3–4, mentioned above, a better translation would be, “The throne of God, even the Lamb, will be in the city, and His servants will serve Him. *They will see His face.*” It is the Lamb, the Lord Jesus, who is fully God, who will be seen. And when we see Him, I guarantee, we will not be disappointed. ■

Vengeance Is the Lord's

Read Romans 12:9–21

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.—Romans 12:18

The amount of death and destruction described in the book of Joshua is not for the squeamish. Historian John Bright somewhat jokingly writes, “You simply cannot preach from this book, and you ought not to teach it to children. Shield our gentle ears from violence such as this.” It is true that large sections of Joshua contain difficult passages about battles, conquest, and killing.

As we read about the destruction of cities and kings, the violence can be overwhelming to modern day readers, troubling to us as Christians, and offensive to skeptics. But let's pause and consider this issue from a broader biblical and theological perspective. In Paul's letter to the Romans he discusses the repayment of evil. Paul contrasts our individual desire for retribution (v. 17) with God's sovereign judgment of evil: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay” (v. 19). As Joshua led the conquest of the Promised Land, God would order the destruction of people and communities who were morally corrupt. Extra-biblical

resources confirm that these places were populated by God-haters and were extremely evil. They practiced child sacrifice and other unthinkable behaviors. With each city destroyed, God was carrying out His divine judgment of sin.

Paul's letter to the Romans is a reminder that God commands us to love one another, and, as much as possible, to live in peace. We are to be the people who are “joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer” (v. 12). But our call to exhibit these qualities does not negate God's justice or His wrath in response to disobedience. Vengeance did not belong to Joshua, and it does not belong to us. Rather, it belongs to the Lord.

► God's Word reminds us to abstain from seeking vengeance, and instead pursue peace. We are to love, care, and show generosity. When we leave vengeance to the Lord, we can better follow His leading. Are there people whom you need to approach with a more charitable attitude?

Pray with Us

Praise the Lord! His grace is not limited, and we can extend it to those around us. Our freedom and forgiveness in Christ enable us to extend love and generosity to others.

Listen to the Lord

Read Joshua 8:1–29

But whoever listens to me will live in safety and be at ease, without fear of harm.—Proverbs 1:33

Have you ever noticed that a few moments after someone speaks you've already forgotten what they said? Relationship counselors often recommend a practice called "active listening" where one person repeats back what someone else has said to them. This ensures the speaker that the recipient has not only heard, but also clearly understood the intended message. As believers, we may sometimes struggle to listen well to God.

The battle of Ai has similarities and differences to the battle of Jericho and the two are meant to be compared and contrasted. First, we can contrast their military approaches. At the battle of Ai, the Lord commanded Joshua to plan an ambush. They would trick the people by luring them from their city. Once they were vulnerable, 5,000 Israelite soldiers would conquer the city. This is a stark contrast to Jericho, where the Israelite army was exposed in broad daylight. Their first line of offense? Priests blowing trumpets! Another

notable difference was the approval by the Lord to take possession of the plunder and livestock in Ai. At Jericho they were to destroy everything.

There are similarities in both narratives as well. In both cases the Lord declared that He had already delivered the opposition into the Israelites' hands. Before any sword was lifted, the battle was already won. Yahweh clearly demonstrated that when His people listen and obey His commands, He will fulfill His promises. The point the Lord was making to Joshua, the Israelites, as well as future generations was that in order to take possession of the Promised Land, they must listen to *and* obey the Lord's commands. Blessings and curses came for doing or not doing what the Lord commanded them to do.

► Perhaps we miss the Lord's victories in our lives because we fail to listen and obey. Today, take time to listen for God's leading. This means taking time to be quiet before Him, reading His Word, and listening to what He presses on your heart.

Pray with Us

Lord, make us active listeners of your voice and active doers of your Word! Help us remember the message to Joshua and the Israelites in today's passage: to gain a victory, we have to listen and obey.

Renewing a Covenant

Read Joshua 8:30–34

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.—Psalm 51:10

Many married couples choose to renew their wedding vows. Some do this to celebrate a milestone in their relationship, others to let their friends and family know they would get married again in a heartbeat. Still, others reaffirm vows after successfully surviving a rough period. Whatever the reason, the renewal helps the couple reflect on the past and dream about the future. In essence, the act makes the relationship stronger.

Our text today is the culmination of chapters 7 and 8. Tensions arose after the Ai attack. It was discovered that the defeat of the Israelites was a result of Achan's sin. Starting afresh, Joshua and the Israelites ambushed Ai and made the city a permanent heap of ruins (v. 28). Therefore, after these two campaigns and internal conflict, God's people renewed their commitment to the Lord.

Joshua built an altar to the Lord (v. 30) and presented offerings (v. 31). He wrote on stone copy of the law of

Moses, reminding the Israelites, that they were not a lawless people like those they had just defeated. Rather, they were a nation dictated and judged by God's rule of Law. Joshua proceeded to read the words of the Law to all in attendance. This act was significant because it demonstrated the importance of the Pentateuch, also known as the first five books of the Old Testament. Ultimately, Joshua was renewing the covenant he and the people had with Yahweh. The Lord would be their God and they would be His people. The renewed contract made their relationship with God stronger than ever.

► What commitments do you need to renew? A friendship? A family relationship? Perhaps your relationship with the Lord needs to be restored? A great place to start is by reading Scripture. Allow God's Word to guide you and give you the wisdom and patience you need.

Pray with Us

Is God calling you to a greater commitment to Him and His Word? Ask Him to show you how you can walk closer to Him, love Him more, and be a worthy witness to the gospel.

Deceitful Neighbors

Read Joshua 9:1–27

Do not steal. Do not lie. Do not deceive one another.—Leviticus 19:11

Have you received an email saying you've received a great inheritance? All you need to do, says the sender, is click this link and enter your bank account information. Savvy people know it's a scam. The sender wants to steal from you. These popular online deceptions may be easier to spot than deceitful acts which occur in personal relationships.

While Joshua was preparing his troops for battle, delegates from Gibeon seeking a peace treaty caught him off guard. Notice the carefully planned details of their deception: "worn-out sacks and old wineskins, cracked and mended," "worn and patched" sandals, and "dry and moldy" bread (vv. 3–5). At first, their request seemed reasonable. They tricked Joshua and the Israelites into thinking they were from a faraway country instead of revealing their true identity as close neighbors (vv. 7–15).

When the Israelites realized they had been duped, they faced a conundrum. Should they attack the Gibeonites? Or should they honor

their commitment even though it was made under a false pretense? Joshua's inexperience as a leader was on display. But he was a quick learner and refused to attack the Gibeonites. He kept his treaty with a condition that they serve the Israelites. This chapter presents a lesson Joshua learned on his quest: God would keep His promise and so should His people.

There are several occasions when the Lord had every right to turn His back on His people, or annihilate them all together. However, Yahweh had made a commitment to the people of Israel and was steadfast in honoring His promises. The lesson Joshua learned is one we need to learn as well: God keeps His promise and so should we.

► As Christ followers, we are not to be deceptive, but people who are true to our word. God keeps His promises, and so should we! Consider how you can live in light of today's lesson. Let's make commitments carefully and honor our promises.

Pray with Us

The deceitfulness of the Gibeonites is a sobering reminder that Christ followers have to be true to our word and follow God's Word. Lord, help us stay faithful and truthful even in the most challenging times.

He Fights for You

Read Joshua 10:1–15

Surely the LORD was fighting for Israel!—Joshua 10:14

The annual Midnight Sun Game is held in Fairbanks, Alaska, on June 21, the longest day of the year. The game is played through the midnight hour and never uses artificial lights. For residents, it is a way to reflect on the passing year and the survival during a long winter. In Joshua's day, the Israelites experienced their own long day of survival. Thankfully, the Lord was fighting their battle.

Joshua marched his army all night in order to execute a surprise attack on the king of Jerusalem and his allies. While Joshua was in the lead, Yahweh was in command. This is most evident when the author records the Lord performing two distinct miracles.

The first was when He made the sun and moon stand still so the Israelites could continue their dominance on the battlefield (vv. 12–13). This language is probably not literal, but describes the phenomenon from an observer's point of view. Just as we, for example, often speak of the sun as "rising" and "setting." The text doesn't explain how the Lord

prolonged the hours of light during the battle, but it demonstrated that the Lord of Lights was in complete control and would fight for His people. This was not a new occurrence! After all, Yahweh had created a pillar of fire in front of Pharaoh so the Israelites could escape Egypt. He held back the waters of the Red Sea, allowing them to escape. He provided food and drink in the midst of their desert journey. Then, outside of Gilgal, He extended the hours of the day, so that the Israelites could continue their quest. Shortly after, He sent hailstones to destroy their enemies. We should never doubt God's power. The Lord of Lights continues to fight for His people today.

► What battles are you fighting today? An argument with family or friends? Anxiety or depression? An unexpected trial? Allow the Lord of Lights to fight for you. Seek His face and His Word. As you go through your day, commit your battles to the Lord, He will get you through it.

Pray with Us

Thank the Lord that He is fighting our battles for us. Praise Him that, as in ancient times, He fights for His people today. Believe that in Christ the victory is already won.

God and Science

Read Job 38:2–15

*Have you ever given orders to the morning,
or shown the dawn its place?—Job 38:12*

When you think about God and science, do they seem pitted against one another? Some people wrestle with accepting biblical accounts that seem to go against the natural order of things. They ask questions such as: Was the world created by the spoken word of God? Did a flood cover the entire earth? Why aren't dinosaurs mentioned in the Bible?

It is helpful to pause from Joshua's quest to address this sticky issue. In Joshua we have read several accounts that seem to go against natural scientific principles: holding back the Jordan River (3:1–17), the walls of Jericho falling (6:1–27), the sun and the moon standing still (10:12–13), and hailstones thrown from heaven (10:11).

Our text today helps us unpack this seeming contradiction. Job and his friends had been wrestling with the character and nature of God. If you read the earlier portions of Job, you would get the impression that they thought they knew more about God and the world than

God did. Finally, God speaks in Job 38:1–18 and declares His power over all creation. He explains the distinctive difference between human understanding and the divine: "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand" (v. 4). Of course, we know that is rhetorical question. None of us has the ability to understand God.

God asks Job to consider His authority over the natural world. God "laid the earth's foundation" (v. 4). He placed the sea and the stars and the clouds (vv. 7–9). The Lord is unambiguously clear that He is not in opposition to nature; rather, He is in control of it. While this passage may not answer all of our questions, it helps frame our conversations about God *and* science.

► What are some questions you have about God and the Bible? Our *Today in the Word* Bible answers team would love to hear from you. Go to todayintheword.org/connect/ to submit your questions.

Pray with Us

Today we invite you to praise God as Creator and Sustainer of all life. He has authority over the natural world, He "laid the earth's foundation" (Job 38:4), and He has a plan for your life.

Five Slaughtered Kings

Read Joshua 10:16–27

*On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written,
King of kings and Lord of lords.—Revelation 19:16*

When we think about war, we may tend to either romanticize it or discard it all together. But those who have served in the armed forces know it is brutal. Today's text recalls the graphic reality of war for Joshua and his army. After capturing the five opposing kings, he ordered them to be executed and their bodies exposed. In the time before artillery, war was gritty, up close and personal.

Joshua 10 recounts such a gruesome account that it may make you ask questions about the mercy and compassion of the Lord. However, it's important to remember the bigger picture. Like a general, Yahweh led His people to take over the Promised Land. This quest was a part of the fulfillment of His promises. Professor Robert Hubbard writes, "This is a one-time-only event to achieve a specific purpose: to provide Israel a homeland and God a geographical base from which He eventually blesses the world." But God did not take delight

in the destruction of others . . . quite the contrary.

We know from Scripture that God takes "no pleasure in the death of the wicked" (Ezek. 33:11). Rather, He desires for them to turn from their ways and live. However, the five kings defied the Lord and their fate was written with their denials. The Lord would have gladly let them live and prosper if they had turned to Him, just as He had with the Gibeonites, Rahab, and her family. Sadly, the kings refused to turn to God, even when death was imminent. This was a lesson for Joshua's commanders: Yahweh was the only king who would reign.

► It doesn't matter whether you are a millionaire or an inmate in prison, you still have a *kingdom*: things, events, or people that are important to you. But that doesn't make you the king or queen. We should surrender our personal kingdom to God. Allow Him to reign in your life.

Pray with Us

Today's devotional reminds us that only the Lord is King and only His kingdom is the true one. During your prayer time, ask: Who reigns in my life? Have I surrendered my personal "kingdoms" to God's will?

The Lord Prevails

Read Joshua 10:28–12:24

The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you.—Deuteronomy 31:8

In Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, Sauron the Dark Lord of Mordor amasses enormous armies to take over middle earth and spread hate and evil. Peter Jackson's films capture the scope and scale of these armies like never before, illuminated on the big screen. Numerous times, it appears as if the enemy is too great for Gandalf, Aragon, and the rest of the Fellowship. However, because of their unwavering hope and courage, they consistently prevail as victors.

Joshua and the Israelites were outnumbered and outmatched. Yet, with God's help, they would be victorious. After defeating the southern villages, Joshua turned his attention to the Northern kings who had formed a massive alliance. The coalition was "as numerous as the sand on the seashore" (11:4). This was the largest army Joshua and the Israelites had ever faced. If this were an action film, the dramatic music would begin to play with an enormous army of soldiers marching toward

Joshua. What were they to do? Could this be the end of Joshua and the Israelites?

The northern cities were not fighting merely Joshua's army, but the Lord's army. Yahweh promised Joshua, "By this time tomorrow I will hand all of them, slain, over to Israel" (11:6). When Joshua saw the countless number of soldiers he faced, doubt may have crept into his mind. The insecurities he once had as young leader might have returned. But like before, the Lord commanded him, "Do not be afraid" (11:6). As the narrative continues, Joshua mustered the courage needed for his quest. The Lord would prevail. He always does.

► Fear has the ability to paralyze us. Fear of failure. Fear of the future. Fear of loss. Whatever it may be, fear can grip us and never let go. Like Joshua, we often need to be reminded to be strong and courageous. Allow the Lord to fight your battles. Regardless of how big the enemy may seem, in the end, the Lord prevails.

Pray with Us

Ask the Lord to help you overcome fear and anxiety. Personalize today's key verse, from Deuteronomy 31: The Lord himself goes before *me* and will be with *me*.

God's Not Finished

Read Joshua 13:1–7

For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.—Philippians 2:13

You are never too old (or too young) for God to use you! Evangelist Billy Graham noted that God's plan for us is not limited by our age: "Scripture is filled with examples of men and women whom God used late in life, often with great impact. These men and women refused to use old age as an excuse to ignore what God wanted them to do."

At this point of Joshua's story, scholars estimate that he was roughly 90 years old. But even though he had more years behind him than in front of him, the Lord was not finished using him. Joshua had completed the first half of his mission, conquering the land. Now, the second portion of his task was to distribute the land as the Lord saw fit. The first verse signals the end of battles and triggers a new part of Joshua's quest, the distribution of the land. God's promises would be fulfilled. However, the conquests have taken their toll on Joshua, emotionally

and physically. The author notes: Joshua has grown old (v. 1).

I am surprised Joshua did not respond: "God, I've done a good job. I'd like to start my retirement and take it easy. Can't you find someone else to do the job?" Joshua had given his life to the cause. He had fought in more battles than he probably cared to remember. Perhaps his wounds had turned to wrinkles, and his dark hair had become gray. But when the Lord looked at Joshua, He did not see an old man, past his useful capacity. Instead, God saw a devoted leader with whom He was not finished yet.

▶ A former pastor of mine said, "If you are still breathing, it means God is not done with you yet." Your age doesn't disqualify you from serving the Lord, only your lack of faith does. How can you serve the Lord in a new way today? Or maybe look for ways to create ministry opportunities for those older than you.

Pray with Us

We can serve God and be useful at any age. In our reading, the Lord used Joshua even when he was old and wrinkled! Thank God that neither age nor social or economic status can disqualify us from service.

The Long-Awaited Inheritance

Read Joshua 14:6–15

*An inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.
This inheritance is kept in heaven for you. — 1 Peter 1:4*

Have you ever received an inheritance? Maybe you were left a special memento or a sum of cash from a parent, grandparent, or friend? While the gift itself is important, the most significant part of the inheritance is whom it came from. In chapters 13–19, the author records the various allotments of land given to each of the Israelite tribes. These portions of the land were their inheritance from the Lord. An extraordinary snapshot of God’s promise coming into fruition is in our text today when Caleb finally received his inheritance from God.

You may not have noticed that Joshua’s former spy companion, Caleb, has been missing for a number of chapters. We last saw him when he and Joshua were reporting back to Moses (Numbers 13–14). The two spies insisted that even though the enemies were large, with God, they were confident that they could overtake them and seize the Promised Land. We don’t read any other mention of Caleb—until now. Caleb reminded Joshua of that day

when they spied out the land. More importantly, Caleb noted that he had followed the Lord wholeheartedly for 45 years (vv. 8–10). The word “wholeheartedly” is used three times to describe Caleb’s faith. The word literally means “to be full.” Caleb was passionate about fully and completely following the Lord.

Now that he was 85 years old, he requested his long-awaited inheritance. His zeal for the Lord had not faded. He insisted he was still as strong and vigorous as when Moses sent him out 45 years earlier (v. 11). Joshua was probably not surprised by Caleb’s appeal and passion. He granted Caleb his request and gave him the land promised to him.

► Even if you have never received an inheritance, one is waiting for you in heaven! The apostle Peter reminds us that because of Jesus’ work on the cross and His resurrection power over the grave, all those who believe will one day share in an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading (1 Peter 1:4).

Pray with Us

Lord Jesus, thank you for your sacrifice that opened the way to God for all who believe. Thank you for making us heirs to your kingdom, “an inheritance that never perish, spoil or fade” (1 Peter 1:4).

Cities of Refuge

Read Joshua 20:1–9

You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.—Psalm 32:7

Embassies throughout the world provide a safe haven for their nation's citizens. In times of trouble, the embassy is one place where citizens can seek help. In our text today, the Lord requested Joshua to build cities of refuge (v. 1). These cities would provide safe places for people who accidentally or unintentionally killed someone (v. 2). The Lord laid out rules and regulations to provide fair and just treatment (vv. 4–6). This command was not new to the Israelites, it was first given to Moses (Ex. 21:13). Joshua now designated six specific cities throughout the nation.

This legislation demonstrates God's mercy and the sanctity of human life. It's true the Pentateuch commands such actions as "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" (Exodus 21; Leviticus 24), but what Yahweh is addressing here falls under different circumstances. God recognizes that we live in a fallen world and tragedies happen. Therefore, He willingly pours out His mercy on people

who unintentionally kill, even when the world might prefer a different outcome. God's commands to let them live under certain conditions and mandates affirm the sanctity and dignity of every human life. The person who caused the accidental death still had value and worth in God's eyes but was not free to return home until he was found innocent and waited for some time (v. 6).

These rules may seem odd to us today in our somewhat "over-legalized" world, but they were a clear sign of God's character and justice. God was initiating order, grace, and mercy into the world. Much of which is seen today, but there is still more to be done.

► As recipients of God's grand mercy, we ought to be a place of refuge for those who carry the heavy burden of tragedy. How can your home or life be a sanctuary for those who need mercy from God and the world? Be on the lookout for those who need a safe place.

Pray with Us

Today's devotional gives us a beautiful picture of God's protection and refuge. We invite you to pray together with the Psalmist: "You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble" (Ps. 32:7).

Behind the Scenes

Read Joshua 21

Not one of all the LORD's good promises to Israel failed; every one was fulfilled.—Joshua 21:45

Hidden Figures, a book and then movie released in 2016, tell the true story of three female African American mathematicians who worked for NASA and played a pivotal role in launching astronaut John Glenn into orbit. Even though they quietly worked behind the scenes, their contribution changed history. Throughout Joshua's quest, there was another group of hidden figures who played a crucial role in Israel's journey. Today's text highlights the significant contribution of the Levites and God's fulfilled promises to them.

After the lands were allocated and cities of refuge established, the Levites requested towns to live in as promised during Moses' time. These people, from the tribe of Levi, were the keepers and teachers of the Law (Deut. 33:10). Notice that, for the Levites, their inheritance was not land; their inheritance was Yahweh alone (13:33). Therefore, instead of requesting land, they reminded Joshua that the Lord had promised to give them towns to live in and pastures

for their flocks. These were scattered throughout the region so they could more easily teach people about the Lord and His ways. Similar to the cities of refuge, their allotment of towns was in fulfillment of the Mosaic legislation.

This chapter highlights the nation's obedience to God. For a relatively new nation, following the Lord's commands wasn't easy. But the Israelites recognized they would not be where they were but for Yahweh's protection and provision. The nation learned to care for God's servants, the Levites. They would not be able to serve the Lord and do His work if it were not for the help and support of the surrounding tribes. From tribe to tribe, everyone contributed to helping the Levites find a home.

► In today's Christian culture, the teachers of the law are our ministers, Sunday School teachers, small group leaders, etc. These godly servants may be overlooked when it comes to their roles in shaping our society, but they play a pivotal part. Today, thank one of these servants of God.

Pray with Us

You've never met a Levite (the teacher of the Law), but most likely you remember who first brought the Word of God into your life. Pray for that teacher, parent, professor, or your first pastor today.

Inquire, Don't Infer

Read Joshua 22

It is to be a witness between us and you and the generations that follow, that we will worship the LORD.—Joshua 22:27

Have you ever been misunderstood? Or, have you ever misunderstood someone else, in particular what they believe about God? I know I have. It is easy to jump to assumptions about others. We need to remind ourselves to inquire and not infer.

We are not the only ones who jump to conclusions without first asking all the right questions. After everything that had transpired, the time had come for the remaining tribes to return to the land they inherited on the opposite side of the Jordan River. Their land and families had been waiting for them since chapter 1 of this unforgettable quest. But before they left for their new homeland, Joshua implored them to keep the commandments of God and to serve Him all the days of their lives (v. 5).

The men's devotion to Yahweh was seemingly short lived. Not long after leaving, they built an altar near the Jordan (vv. 10, 19). Leaders of Israel were sent to persuade these men to repent and tear down their altar. They

warned that consequences of their actions would fall on everyone, just as they had before with Peor (Numbers 25) and Achan (Joshua 7).

The leaders of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh were shocked and realized they had been misunderstood. They clarified that they had indeed built the altar for the Lord as a reminder to surrounding tribes that they worshiped Yahweh (vv. 21–29). The altar was to be a witness between the two parts of Israel and represented unity between the eastern and western tribes. What appeared to be an act of defiance was really an attempt to create unity and glorify God.

► Is there someone you may have misunderstood? Even if you think you know where they stand on issues about God and faith, perhaps it is worth taking a second look and listen before speaking. Your conversation may open doors. Even if you disagree, you will know how to pray for and help them along their journey.

Pray with Us

Together with Joshua, we say, "We will worship the Lord" (Josh. 22:27). We pray that we will boldly share our story of salvation as a testimony of God's love and mercy, and as an act of faith and worship.

Good and Godly Leaders

Read Joshua 23

So be very careful to love the LORD your God.—Joshua 23:11

Our second child was born the day Billy Graham died. I still remember being in the hospital room as the breaking news of Graham's death was reported. Understandably, I only heard a small portion of the tributes that poured in on that day, but there was no doubt that the famed evangelist lived a life worth remembering. He was faithful to God until the end.

In our text today, Joshua was approaching his personal finish line. Before his time on earth was over, he reminded the people that good leaders are first and foremost godly leaders. First, he gave God all the credit for how far they had come (v. 3). Then, he reminded the people that the Lord had fulfilled all His promises by fighting for them and giving them their inheritance (vv. 4–5).

The rest of the passage contains well learned lessons on leadership. A godly leader is to be in God's Word and do what it says. It does little good if one knows what the

commandments are, but then turns from them (vv. 6, 16). Joshua also warned leaders not to associate with pagan worshipers. As a young nation, he wanted his followers to remain steadfast in their commitment to the Lord and not be persuaded by outside teachings (vv. 7–8, 12–13).

As Joshua reflected on his years of walking with the Lord, the last lesson he taught the people of Israel was that remaining faithful to God is a lifelong pursuit. It is easy to give into the lies of the enemy. But good leaders are also godly leaders. They are not just godly for a moment, but their entire lives are led by God and His Word.

► Whether you realize it or not, you are a leader! In your business, your neighborhood, or your family, you have the potential to influence those around you. Knowingly or unknowingly people watch you. They see how you conduct yourself. Make it your goal to be a godly leader.

Pray with Us

As we read Joshua's instructions on godly leadership today, it's a good time to review the lessons we've learned from Joshua's quest. Ask the Lord to show you how to be a godly leader.

Serving Nothing Else

Read Joshua 24:1–27

*As for me and my household,
we will serve the LORD.—Joshua 24:15*

Do you know that the average person makes roughly 30,000 decisions in a single day? Some choices are small, such as “How long should I brush my teeth?” Others are life-altering, such as “Should I marry this person?” Life is full of choices. And as we near the end of the Israelites’ quest, we find that God’s people faced an enormous decision.

In the first 13 verses, Joshua reminds the leaders about their history. He begins with Terah, the father of Abraham, and concludes with the quest they had just completed. Did Joshua feel the people had forgotten what had just transpired? Did they already need this history lesson? No. Joshua recalled what the Lord had done in order to convince the people of Israel to commit their lives to Yahweh alone (vv. 14–15). Ultimately, he gave them an important choice. Who would they serve? He made his own decision very clear: “As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD” (v. 15).

The people’s response must have been pleasing to Joshua’s ears, reaching to Yahweh’s throne. They responded, “Far be it from us to forsake the Lord to serve other gods!” (v. 16). They recognized that throughout their quest, the Lord had carried them, so they devoted their lives to Him (v. 21). Joshua warned them that if they turned away from God and were unfaithful to Him, the same judgment and consequences the Canaanites faced would be on them (vv. 19–20). But if they remained obedient to God’s laws and were faithful to Him, then the Lord would bless them all the days of their life. Joshua left the Israelites with this choice. What were they going to do?

► What is your choice? Out of all the decisions in your lifetime, none is more important than whether or not you surrender your life to the Lord. I can guarantee there is no greater decision you will ever make. Choose today to serve Him. He will give you courage for your quest!

Pray with Us

Joshua’s decision for himself and his household to serve the Lord is a wonderful example for us today. Will you make the same choice? Ask for the Holy Spirit’s power to surrender your whole life to God’s will.

A Final Resting Place

Read Joshua 24:28–33

*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race,
I have kept the faith.* —2 Timothy 4:7

Many books of the Bible end with turmoil, strife, or unanswered questions. Not Joshua. The book ends on a satisfying, harmonious note with calmness in the land and peace among people. As Israelites' quest ended and they could finally settle down in their long-awaited Promised Land, it must have been a surreal feeling. Perhaps they reflected on the past as they put away their swords and cleaned dirt and blood from their garments.

In the next days, there would be no more marching or fighting. However, they might not have realized that another battle was about to begin: a battle for their faithfulness. Would they keep the commandments of the Lord and live their lives for Him? Whether or not they would is a different story to tell, but they had been given a fine example of faithfulness to God in Joshua.

In this closing section, the author records the final resting places of Joshua, Joseph, and Eleazar (the religious leader). Joshua is referred

to as “the servant of God” (v. 29) which is the first time he is given this descriptor. In chapter 1, Joshua was called Moses' aid or assistant, but now he has been given the title servant. He came a long way on his quest but through it all, he found the courage to carry on. Joshua's obedience to the Lord was rewarded, and he died in peace knowing that he had led the Lord's people into the Promised Land. We can look to Joshua's life of service as an example of how to live a life in obedience to God. Of course Joshua had flaws, but his courage to lead people and follow God gives us hope even in the midst of our own quest.

► The next several decades for the nation of Israel are anything but peaceful. The book of Judges picks up right where Joshua leaves off and takes the nation through twists and turns that are captivating. If you are curious, continue reading the book of Judges and discover how the story continues.

Pray with Us

As we read about the end of Joshua's quest, we pray we would have, like Joshua, the strength and determination to serve God faithfully until the end. May we, like Paul, be able to say: “I have finished the race” (2 Tim. 4:7).

At Home with Him

Read 1 Peter 2:4–12

Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God.—1 Peter 2:12

As we end our journey through Joshua, it is important to remember how we fit in the bigger picture. It's easy to dismiss the people and events of this book as long ago and faraway. But the implications of their quest shed significant insight into our daily walk with Jesus.

In today's text, Peter communicates something that was brand new to the entire world. Previously, the Israelites were the only ones specifically chosen by God. Unless there were special circumstances, for instance Rahab and her family, the story of God and humanity was mostly about Yahweh and the Israelites. However, because of Jesus, the true living Stone (v. 4), non-Jews are able to be part of God's family, too.

The Israelites were God's chosen people whom He was making into a nation. They would always have a special place in God's heart. But because of Jesus, Peter proclaimed that non-Jews also have a place in the kingdom. Followers of Jesus,

regardless of race or ethnicity, "are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession" (v. 9). Because of Jesus, the tent has been widened and table has been extended. Just as the Israelites were called out of slavery in Egypt, we have been called "out of darkness into his wonderful light" (v. 9).

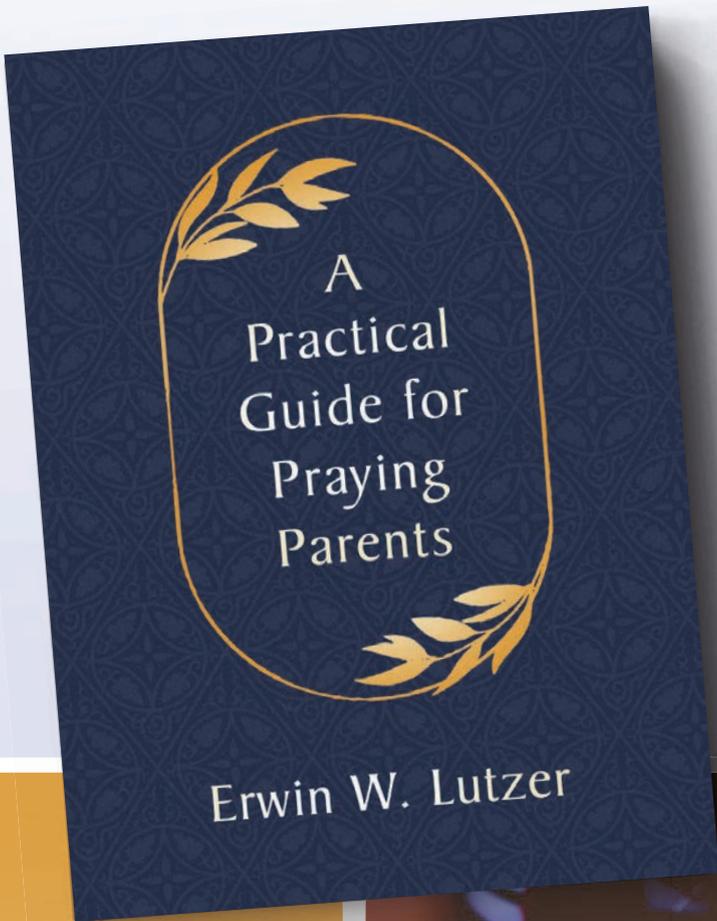
The Israelites wandered in the desert for decades with no place to call their home. Then Joshua led the people on a quest into the Promised Land. In a similar fashion, you and I have wandered aimlessly looking for purpose and fulfillment. But the Lord leads us on a quest that is sometimes difficult, nevertheless bringing us to a place that is unimaginable—at home with Him.

► What have you learned from your study of Joshua? How can you apply those lessons to your own faith journey? Like Joshua, we can step out in faith boldly, obey God's commands faithfully, and remain loyal to our calling. May you, too, have courage for the quest.

Pray with Us

As we conclude our study, let's thank the Lord for how He revealed Himself to the Israelites, and to us as well. What a powerful, mighty God we serve! We can have courage for our quest with Him by our side!

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YOU CAN GIVE YOUR CHILDREN
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