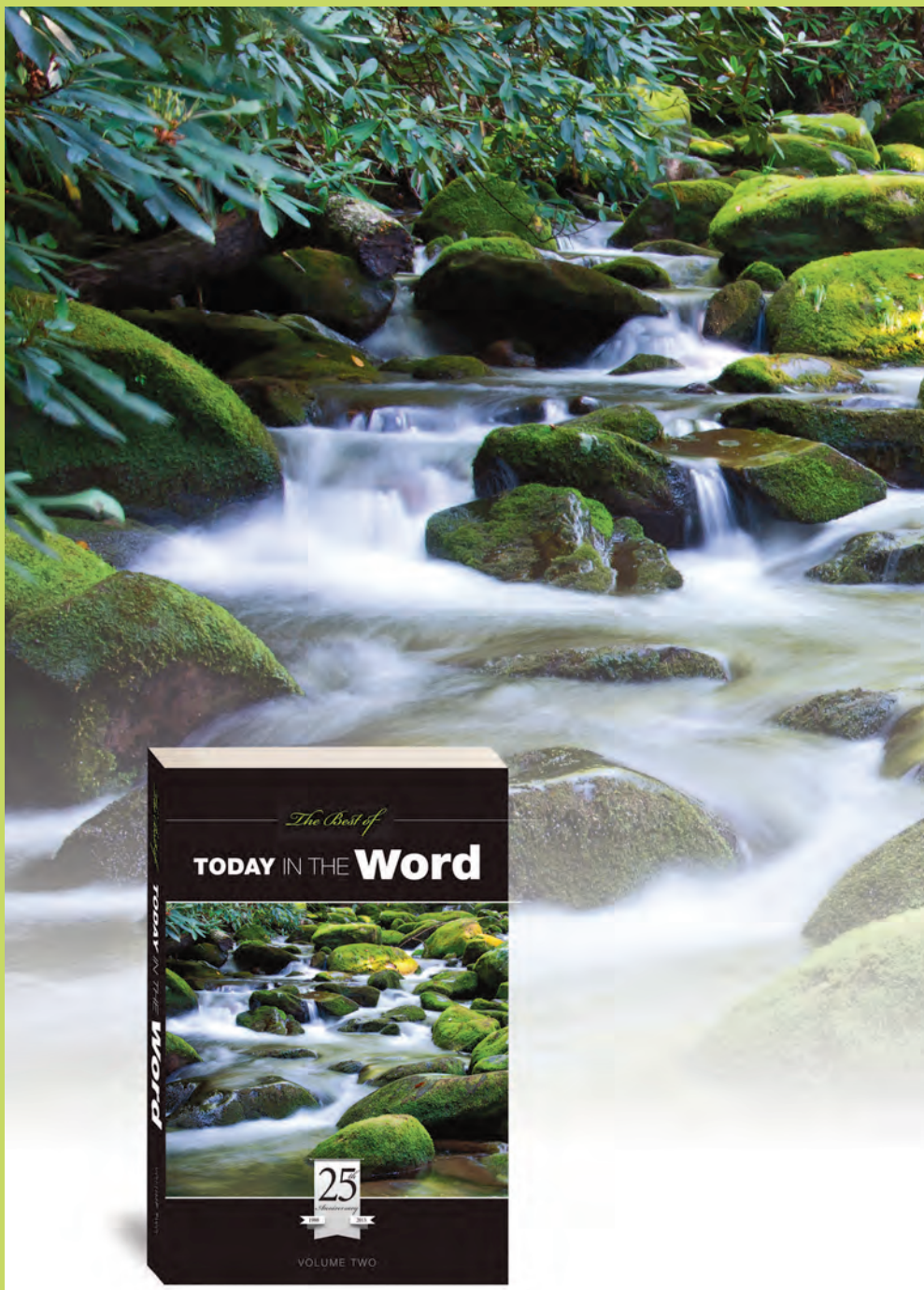
MAY 2015

TODAY IN THE Word
A MINISTRY OF MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE

The LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.

Joshua 1:9

Book of Joshua: The Battle Belongs to the Lord

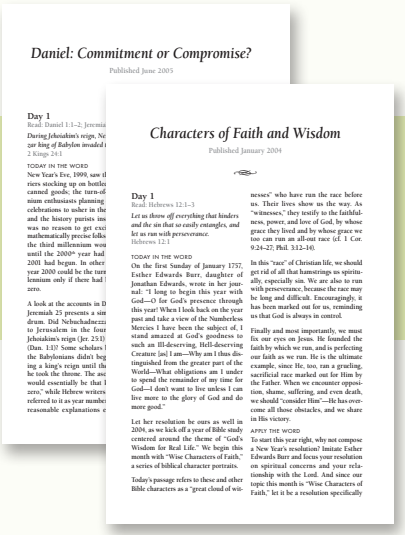

The Best of
TODAY IN THE Word
25
VOLUME TWO

The Best of

TODAY IN THE Word

VOLUME TWO • 25TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

Enjoy *The Best of Today in the Word, Volume Two*, a selection of 12 of our readers' favorite monthly devotionals. With this useful resource, you will deepen your knowledge of God's Word as you delve into Old and New Testament, character, and topical studies. These *Today in the Word* favorites will encourage and challenge you on your life's journey.



Daniel: Commitment or Compromise?

Published June 2005

Day 1

Read: Daniel 1:1–2; Jeremia

During Jehoiakim's reign, Ne
ear king of Babylon invaded J
2 Kings 24:1

TODAY IN THE WORD

New Year's Eve, 1999, saw t
riers stocking up on bottle
canned goods; the turn-of
nium enthusiasts planning
celebrations to usher in the
and the history purists ins
was no reason to get exci
mathematically precise folks
the third millennium won
until the 2000th year had
2001 had begun. In other
year 2000 could be the turn
lennium only if there had
zero.

A look at the accounts in D
Jeremiah 25 presents a stir
drum. Did Nebuchadnezz
to Jerusalem in the four
Jehoiakim's reign (Jer. 25:1)
(Dan. 1:1)? Some scholars
the Babylonians didn't beg
ing a king's reign until th
he took the throne. The ass
would essentially be that
zero," while Hebrew writers
referred to it as year numbe
reasonable explanations e

Characters of Faith and Wisdom

Published January 2004

Day 1

Read: Hebrews 12:1–3

Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance.
Hebrews 12:1

TODAY IN THE WORD

On the first Sunday of January 1757, Esther Edwards Burr, daughter of Jonathan Edwards, wrote in her journal: "I long to begin this year with God—O for God's presence through this year! When I look back on the year past and take a view of the Numberless Mercies I have been the subject of, I stand amazed at God's goodness to such an Ill-deserving, Hell-deserving Creature [as] I am—Why am I thus distinguished from the greater part of the World—What obligations am I under to spend the remainder of my time for God—I don't want to live unless I can live more to the glory of God and do more good."

Let her resolution be ours as well in 2004, as we kick off a year of Bible study centered around the theme of "God's Wisdom for Real Life." We begin this month with "Wise Characters of Faith," a series of biblical character portraits.

Today's passage refers to these and other Bible characters as a "great cloud of witnesses" who have run the race before us. Their lives show us the way. As "witnesses," they testify to the faithfulness, power, and love of God, by whose grace they lived and by whose grace we too can run an all-out race (cf. 1 Cor. 9:24–27; Phil. 3:12–14).

In this "race" of Christian life, we should get rid of all that hamstrings us spiritually, especially sin. We are also to run with perseverance, because the race may be long and difficult. Encouragingly, it has been marked out for us, reminding us that God is always in control.

Finally and most importantly, we must fix our eyes on Jesus. He founded the faith by which we run, and is perfecting our faith as we run. He is the ultimate example, since He, too, ran a grueling, sacrificial race marked out for Him by the Father. When we encounter opposition, shame, suffering, and even death, we should "consider Him"—He has overcome all those obstacles, and we share in His victory.

APPLY THE WORD

To start this year right, why not compose a New Year's resolution? Imitate Esther Edwards Burr and focus your resolution on spiritual concerns and your relationship with the Lord. And since our topic this month is "Wise Characters of Faith," let it be a resolution specifically

Request your copy today!

Use the reply card in this issue, or order a copy online at www.todayintheword.com.

Thank you for your ministry partnership!

TODAY WITH PAUL NYQUIST

President of Moody Bible Institute

Fighting Battles

Some people say life is a battle. They are right. We face danger and hardship. We risk. We fight. Sometimes we lose, and other times we are victorious. But one thing seems certain: life's challenges never end.

One of the most famous battles in Scripture involves Joshua and the city of Jericho. God's chosen people had faced an arduous journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. They had experienced hunger, exhaustion, and discord. Now their path was blocked by fortified enemy cities.

Jericho stood in their way. It was walled, and although relatively small, it was extremely well-fortified. Some scholars say it could easily have survived a year-long siege. The battle of Jericho is the subject of songs and spirituals, because what happened next was incredible.

God gave Joshua peculiar instructions about how to fight this particular battle. He begins by declaring victory. The Lord says, "See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands" (6:2).

The Israelites were instructed to march around the city once every day for six days. The priests were told to carry trumpets before the ark of the Lord. On the seventh day, they were to march again, seven times, but this day the priests would blow the trumpets. The people were to give a loud shout—and the walls of the city would collapse (6:1–5).

From an earthly perspective, God's instructions did not make sense. I can only imagine their hesitation and doubt. Wasn't it better to sneak up on your enemy? Why march around creating a huge spectacle? But regardless of any doubts they had, God's people obeyed and victory came. As the walls collapsed, it was clear that the honor belonged to God alone. He had gone before them.

God goes before us as well. Too often we fight life's battles on our own. At the beginning of the book, God tells Joshua, "Be strong and courageous because you will lead these people to inherit the land" (1:6). He says, "you will"—not "you might." God promised, and He would keep that promise.

The Lord continued, saying, "Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." (1:9). These are great words for Joshua and also for us today. As we study the book of Joshua, we will learn about the nation of Israel and the mighty God they served. But we will also learn how God can help us face our own battles.

When we are up against daunting circumstances, we place our trust firmly in God. We are to remember His faithfulness in the past, trust Him with our present, follow His instructions, and watch as He leads us to victory.

THEOLOGY MATTERS

by John Koessler

God and Property

For many modern readers, the actions of Israel in the book of Joshua seem indefensible. We wonder how they could claim that the land of Canaan was rightfully theirs when others were already living in it. Some have gone so far as to call Israel's occupation of Canaan an example of biblically sanctioned ethnic cleansing. It is impossible to understand Israel's actions without taking into account God's unique relationship to the earth.

The earth belongs to God. The psalmist declares that the earth, all that is in it, and all who dwell upon it are the Lord's (Ps. 24:1). Israel's claim on Canaan had its roots in promises God made to Abraham (Gen. 13:17; 50:24). God also determines the boundaries within which people live (Acts 17:26). The rise and fall of nations, along with the movement of peoples across the globe, are all part of the exercise of God's sovereignty. The earth belongs to the Lord, who is "sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and gives them to anyone he wishes" (Dan. 4:32).

Dr. Lawson Stone, professor of Old Testament at Asbury Seminary, has pointed out that in Joshua's day nobody "owned" Canaan in the modern sense. It was a violent and unstable region, whose "kings" were often warlords who fought over territory. Many of the battles described in the book of Joshua were defensive in nature, a response to aggression initiated by Canaanite warlords who amassed armies against God's people. But the most significant aspect of Joshua's campaign was that it was directly and explicitly commanded by God (Josh. 1:11).

The Bible acknowledges the legitimacy of "private" property. The Law of Moses included regulations that dealt with ownership of animals, houses, and land. The New Testament likewise affirms the right of ownership. Ananias and his wife Sapphira were judged by God when they sold a piece of property and pretended to donate the entire sum to the church. But they were not obligated to sell the land or to donate the proceeds to the church. Peter explained the nature of their sin in these words: "Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God" (Acts 5:4). We are "owners" of what we possess—but we are stewards first. God has a claim on our property because He has a prior claim on our lives. The earth belongs to the Lord, and so do we.

For Further Study

To learn more about God's role in the conquest of Canaan, read *Holy War in the Bible: Christian Morality and an Old Testament Problem* edited by Heath A. Thomas, Jeremy Evans, and Paul Copan (InterVarsity).

FROM THE EDITORS

by Joe Forrider

"Important Words from a Close Friend"

Editors' Note: Joe Forrider is the web content manager for the Today in the Word *team. This month he is our guest writer for this column.*

Romans 13:7 encourages us to give honor to whom honor is due. I would like to do exactly that in this column: give honor to my friend and yours, Mike Kellogg. How do I know he's your friend, too? Well, because I know that's what he would call you if he met you in person. "Hello, good friend" was a typical greeting you would hear from Mike for more than thirty years on his Moody Radio program, *Music Thru the Night*. But I'm not honoring Mike because he is our friend. I'm honoring Mike because of his faithful service to our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Today in the Word is a ministry of Moody Bible Institute, and Mike served here at Moody for over 42 years before retiring last year. Mike didn't just serve, though. He served with excellence. Not your typical run-of-the-mill excellence, mind you, but excellence that is worthy of honor. And I'm not the only one who feels that way.

The National Religious Broadcasters (NRB) recognized that Mike has served with such excellence that they want to honor him by inducting him in their Hall of Fame this year:

"The *NRB Hall of Fame Award* is presented to an individual who has made invaluable contributions to the field of Christian communications, all the while exhibiting the highest standards of conduct and evidence of faithfulness in Christ. The *NRB Hall of Fame* stands as a witness for current communicators, a showcase of warriors for Christ who live exemplary lives of valor and compassion, blazing trails and leaving paths for succeeding generations to follow."

Mike Kellogg

Thank you, NRB. I could not have described Mike's service to Christ here at Moody any better!

As a *Today in the Word* reader, you may be familiar with Mike's daily podcast of our devotional on Moody Radio. Until 2015, Mike had been the only person to record our daily podcasts throughout our 27-year history. He has done that with such excellence that the devotional podcast is the second most-downloaded of all Moody Radio programs!

When asked how he feels with all of the accolades and praise that have come his

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TODAY IN THE Word

A MINISTRY OF MOODY BIBLE INSTITUTE

Book of Joshua: The Battle Belongs to the Lord

The fascist and dictatorial threats in the late 1930s and early 1940s posed by Germany and Japan left many wondering if anyone could stop these great military powers. With the aid of other Allied countries, the "Greatest Generation" turned the tide of the war on both fronts, and came home to transform America. But for the past sixty years, the United States has experienced serious moral and social decline. Have we failed to win the battle for our culture and pass our faith on to the next generation?

Those who followed Moses must have asked similar questions when Joshua came to power. Would Joshua live up to the expectations of those who came before him, or would the challenges be too great, the giants too large, and the city walls too thick for the Israelites? As we know, most of their ancestors were so scared of the challenges that they spent forty years wandering in the desert! Yet they, like us, often fail to realize that the battle is not dependent on human abilities but on God's larger plan.

This month in *Today in the Word* we will look at the book of Joshua and examine epic battle sequences and observe how these battles, as well as our own, belong to the Lord. As always, thank you for your faithful support of this ministry that allows many to hear the good news and wage the battle for Christ!

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Transitions Coming into Battle

Students of American history know that many of the most important events in the first one hundred years of our nation's history hinged on the importance of one word: *land*. From seeking out land for religious liberty to the Louisiana Purchase to debates about the expansion of slave territories to manifest destiny, political debates and military battles focused on the acquisition and use of land.

> Moses my servant is dead. Now then … get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them.
>
> Joshua 1:2

This month we will focus on the book of Joshua, and we'll see how the nascent nation of Israel sought to obey God's directives about the land. Our study will be divided into three main parts: the first week we'll examine "Courage in Battle," the next two weeks we'll study "Preparation in Battle," and our final week will see how to "Finish the Battle Well."

While the battles that the Israelites faced against those in the land are a major theme of the book, even more important were the battles that they faced against themselves. This theme plays out within the larger Old Testament theme of leadership. God requires full allegiance from His people, yet they inevitably choose lesser gods. We see this same tension of allegiance throughout the book of Joshua, from whether the people would accept Joshua as their leader to whether they would trust in God's ultimate guidance.

In our passage today, the Lord calls Joshua to prepare the people for the journey ahead and reminds them of the promises He gave to Moses. God gives Joshua reassurance of His presence and the call to leadership. From the very beginning, the Promised Land was a gift from the Lord. Verses 2, 3, and 6 all mention how it is the Lord who would *give* them the land. While they had to follow the Lord's leading, it was a gift that had already been given—all they had to do was follow the Lord's lead.

Apply the Word

As we begin our study, you may or may not yet know what "land" you are supposed to cross into, but are you being faithful to obey God's directions for your life? The Lord does not promise that our battles will be easy, but He does promise to be with us always and to keep His promises. You can obey God's call with confidence in His faithfulness.

Pray with Us

Today we ask you to pray for the undergraduate Missions department faculty on Moody's Chicago campus—Walter Cirafesi, Stephen Clark, Clive Craigen, and Elizabeth Lightbody—who prepare our students to pursue their call to ministry.

Strength and Courage for the Battle Ahead

In battle, it is often the army that is better trained, better disciplined, and better led that wins the day. All of this work happens long before the day of battle. For example, during the Civil War, most soldiers spent about fifty days drilling, marching, and waiting for a single day in a battle. Those who invested this time in training were the best prepared for the battle that lay ahead.

Joshua had been well prepared to lead the Israelites with all of the training that he had under the tutelage of Moses. He saw both the successes and failures of the people, and he also realized the tremendous responsibility that was placed upon him.

Imagine that you were Joshua, about to lead the people into the Promised Land. While you were by Moses' side and saw the great acts of the Lord's mighty hand, you never had to deal directly with God, and the hope and future of your people were not dependent on you. Overnight, everything changed. Now you were required not only to lead the people but also to take them into a hostile land. What would you use as your main guiding principle for yourself and the people?

> Be strong and very courageous … for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.
>
> Joshua 1:9

Thankfully for Joshua, he did not have to determine this for himself. Notice how the Lord did not give him the overall plan of attack or lay out the larger strategic and tactical points. The Lord is more concerned about where Joshua's focus was going to be, and thus commanded him to look to the Book of the Law that had been passed on to Moses. How was Joshua going to be "strong and courageous"? By obeying the law, meditating on it, and being careful to do everything written within it (vv. 7–8).

Apply the Word

What battle do you need strength and courage for this day? Is it a hard work situation, a family challenge, or a health dilemma? The Lord is with you in the midst of the struggle! Even if everything is going well, we can still be strong and courageous by studying the Word of the Lord in order to prepare for the battles that lie ahead.

Pray with Us

Again, let's remember in prayer the Missions department and its faculty: Samuel Naaman, Kyeong-Sook Park, Michael Rydelnik, and Timothy Sisk. Pray that they would continue to grow in grace and knowledge as they lead our students.

Rest When All Rest

Each year, 3.4 million people die from water-related diseases, 780 million people lack access to clean water, and 2.5 billion people lack access to adequate sanitation. If we have access to hot-and-cold running water, we should not take this marker of global affluence for granted or forget about the millions who lack access to clean, healthy, life-giving water.

The Reubenites, Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh clearly knew the value of clean water and access to fertile land, as they had asked Moses if their inheritance could be on the eastern side of the Jordan. Like Moses before him, Joshua reminded the tribes of their promise. While their families and livestock could stay behind, all those capable of fighting were required to take up arms and join their brothers until they too had rest in the land of their inheritance on the other side of the Jordan (see Deut. 12:8–9).

> You are to help them until the LORD gives them rest.
>
> Joshua 1:14–15

The biblical theme of rest stretches from Genesis to the Gospels to the book of Revelation; from God's example of resting on the seventh day of creation (Gen. 2:2–3), to our current rest in Christ (Matt. 11:28–30), and finally to the rest we will experience forever with the King. In our lives, it is healthy and beneficial to have at least a daily and weekly time for rest. Considering the hectic pace of our lives, many advocate for an annual retreat focused on rest and spiritual renewal.

While ultimate rest comes from the Lord, our passage today is a good example of God's people fighting for the rest of others. Like the Trans-Jordan tribes, we too are called to take a stand and "fight" for those who need justice and righteousness. Jesus Himself commanded as much in the Parable of the Good Samaritan and in His actions for the poor, lame, sick, and the blind (see Luke 10:25–37; 7:18–23).

Apply the Word

Over the past decade, much progress has been made to bring fresh water and sanitation to places in need. This could be a project that your church or small group would like to investigate further. What role can you play to bring both physical and Living Water to these communities? This is a wonderful way to fight for the rest of others in need.

Pray with Us

Ken Heulitt, chief financial officer, and his entire team on our Chicago campus, would like you to pray for the continued financial stability and stewardship of Moody's resources as we approach the end of our fiscal year.

Full Obedience

Known as the "Lion of the North," Gustavus Adolphus came to power in Sweden on the eve of the Thirty Years War. He created one of the first modern governments in Europe and earned the title "Father of Modern Warfare." He remains an example of a ruler who wisely applied his learning and expertise, so much so that his men were willing to give him their full obedience.

> Just as we fully obeyed Moses, so we will obey you.
>
> Joshua 1:17

Like Gustavus Adolphus, Joshua had also earned the trust and respect of his people. Being one of two who had faithfully spied out the Promised Land (see Numbers 12–14) and brought back a positive report, he and Caleb survived the forty years of wandering in the wilderness. Their job was to bring up the next generation, being witnesses to the great deeds that the Lord had done in Egypt and in His provisions throughout their journey.

Many of us in individualistic western societies struggle with obedience, whether to God or others in positions of authority. From rebellious teenagers to divisive adults, the idea that God has placed authorities in our lives for our benefit is difficult to reconcile with societies that value merit over position, freedom over conformity, and personal preferences over the good of the broader community. Many an organization and relationship have undergone strife, not as a result of the high cost of doing ministry but because of a lack of humble, godly obedience, both in those who lead and their followers.

These Israelites, the descendants of their rebellious parents, had renewed the covenant and were committing themselves to full obedience, willing to follow Joshua wherever he would lead them. They said that they had learned the lessons about the price of disobedience and rebellion against God and His appointed leaders. They stand as an example of what our obedience to Jesus should look like today.

Apply the Word

Where do you struggle with disobedience? Is there a leader in your life whom you struggle to respect? We can trust that God is sovereign over all human leaders, and we should pray that the Holy Spirit would guide us toward obedience and respect in our relationships today. Our obedience for earthly leaders reflects our spiritual obedience to Christ.

Pray with Us

The Controller's Office staff, Michael Duong, Robert Jones, Alice Leighton-Armah, and Roger Sipes will appreciate your prayers for their service at Moody, as well as their study of God's Word as a department following the *Today in the Word* devotions.

Melting in Fear

On the cusp of D-Day, America's strongest tank commander, General George Patton, was kept out of the fight. The German military feared Patton and believed that he would be leading the main attack force into France, and so Patton was used as a decoy, with fake tanks, trucks, and messages sent out to mislead the enemy. The ruse worked, and the Germans did not commit their full forces to defend against the successful Normandy invasion.

> When we heard of it, our hearts melted in fear and everyone's courage failed.
>
> Joshua 2:11

While the Germans may have been fearful of an American general, how much more anxiety would they have felt if they knew that a leader had the support of God? This was the case for those in the city of Jericho. According to Rahab, the townspeople had heard about how the Lord had gone before the Israelites and what had happened to the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan.

If you recall, most of the Israelites had been incredibly fearful at the prospect of entering the Promised Land, for, while there was great bounty in the land, it also contained giants (see Num. 13:31–32). Rahab reminded the people that the Lord who went before them would fight their battles for them—as long as they remained faithful to Him.

As He does throughout both the Old and New Testament, God chose to use someone from the lowest ranks in society, in this case a prostitute, to encourage the spies and provide safe refuge. Through her courageous act, Rahab hid the Hebrew spies and then asked them to spare her life and the lives of her family when the Israelites would take the city. Rahab serves as an example of God's love and ability to use all kinds of people to bring about His good purposes.

Apply the Word

We can easily melt in the fear of others and allow them to dictate our choices. Pray that the Holy Spirit will help you grow instead in the fear of the Lord. When we have our eyes fixed on Him, we can live a life that is free from the worry about the approval of others while we grow in the wisdom of the Lord (Prov. 1:7).

Pray with Us

Keeping the Controller's Office in our prayers today, please add Annita Smith, Eunice Childress, Marya Preston, and Linda Wahr to your list. Ask God for strength, good teamwork, and fruitfulness in their responsibilities in the workplace.

A Chosen Leader

One of the first peaceful transfers of power between different political parties occurred over two hundred years ago in the United States when Thomas Jefferson, a Democratic-Republican, won the presidential election over John Adams, a Federalist. In many other times and places, political transitions have been marked by anxiety, instability, and even violence.

> So that they may know that I am with you as I was with Moses.
>
> Joshua 3:7

Moses had handed power over to Joshua, but the question remained as to whether Joshua would be able to lead and handle the transition well. His first test of leading the people across the river and into the Promised Land lay before him.

Most of the year, the Jordan River can be easily crossed at numerous points. But at flood stage, the rains would have swelled the river, making it treacherous to cross. But God was with Joshua and the Israelites, just as He had been with Moses (v. 7). Joshua issued instructions to the priests as to their role, and the Lord caused the river to cease flowing—but only after the priests had taken a literal step of faith into the raging rapids (v. 15).

This important imagery would have been a reminder to the people. Their ancestors had been delivered from Egypt on dry land through the Red Sea. Just as the Lord had enabled the Israelites to cross the sea under Moses' leadership, so too would He be with Joshua as they entered the Promised Land and left the wilderness behind. Joshua was affirmed as the chosen leader for such a time. Ultimately, the question of leadership did not reside in the person or personality of Moses or Joshua—as long as the Lord was still with them, the people could follow in faith.

Apply the Word

Leadership can be a challenging calling, even with assistance of the Lord! Pray for those in leadership in your church and community, as well as our national and world leaders. Pray that they would seek wisdom and pursue divine guidance (see 1 Tim. 2:1–2). And thank the Lord for His continued love and protection in our lives in all times and seasons.

Pray with Us

Pray for Janet Stiven, vice president and general counsel, and for her team at the Legal department: Cassandrea Blakely, Max Clayton, Emmy Koh, and Amyra Rodriguez. May God encourage them today as they complete the many tasks that require their expertise.

Stones of Remembrance

Historical markers dot the American landscape—they stand along the side of highways and country roads and are placed in major cities and small towns. These markers contain information about significant events such as battles that changed national history as well as sites of local interest such as an ancient Indian burial ground. Acting as reminders of our past, historical markers give us perspective in our contemporary world so that we can see the importance of the people and events that preceded us.

> These stones are to be a memorial to the people of Israel forever.
>
> Joshua 4:7

In a way similar to historical markers, people in ancient times incorporated physical displays into the landscape to commemorate important events. In many cultures, massive public works were undertaken to show the power and might of those who ruled, and their victories were carved into stone and put up for all to see.

In the Bible, markers were used for the purpose of delineating important boundaries (see Deut. 19:14). For those following Joshua, the twelve stones set near the Jordan River were intended to be a memorial and reminder of what the Lord had done of them. Unlike their ancient counterparts who built massive structures commemorating the military success of generals and kings, the people only needed this small memorial to remind them of the great work of the Lord.

Verse 24 sums up the purpose of this action. First, this "highway marker" was for all the peoples of the earth, not just the Hebrews. Second, this memorial was set up so that the Hebrews would remember that it was the Lord who brought them into the Promised Land, not Joshua's works nor their own might. Upon seeing the simple stone memorial, the correct response would have been fear and awe of the Lord, not mankind. This memorial should help shape their perspective as they entered the land.

Apply the Word

Some people today use actual stones of remembrance to remind them of God's work in their lives. It can be as simple as collecting stones and writing or painting something on them that evokes the memory of what God has done. Reviewing these stones of remembrance, either alone or sharing them with others, can be a powerful way to refocus our perspective on the Lord's love and provision.

Pray with Us

We are grateful for the ministry of Moody Theological Seminary on the Michigan campus. Today, please uphold in prayer its campus dean, Chris Brooks; operations manager, Brian Mollenkamp; and Micah Jelinek, who serves in the library.

Preparation for Battle

Many of us might think of slavery as a scourge of the past, but researchers estimate that 25 to 30 million people are currently enslaved around the globe. While illegal in all countries, nearly every country in the world has been found to have some level of slavery. Many are held in bondage and forced into labor camps, prostitution or forced marriage, service as child soldiers, or servitude for ostensible debt relief. The work of abolishing slavery and freeing those who are enslaved is far from over.

> Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.
>
> Joshua 5:9

The Israelites knew all too well the life of enslaved people, having been brick makers in Egypt for generations. The shame and disgrace of that event stayed with them, even after they had escaped their bondage. As they were about to enter the Promised Land, the Lord "rolled away the reproach" or shame from slavery. Like the future prophet would say, justice had been rolled out, and they were finally going to inherit the land that they had been promised. (Amos 5:24)

Yet this justice from God came after the important act of following God's call of consecration. Like the previous generation, they had to be circumcised before they entered the land as an outward sign of their covenant with the Lord. Stretching back to Abraham, circumcision was an act of obedience to God that often came before a promise was fulfilled (Genesis 17). For Abraham, it was a son and a heritage; for the Israelites, the Promised Land.

While circumcision was meant as an outward sign of their obedience and devotion, the true transformation was to be one of the heart (Jer. 4:4, Rom. 2:28–29). For the next two weeks, we will continue this theme of preparation for battle, and it is fitting that we begin with the most important preparation: the position of our hearts before the Lord.

Apply the Word

Moody Bible Institute has a program of study to help prepare people to minister to victims of exploitation. Pray for the instructors and students who have a heart to bring the freedom and healing found in Christ. You can learn more about this program and take a free course that shares biblical responses to this urgent problem: www.moody.edu/ministry-victims-exploitation/.

Pray with Us

As we continue to lift up to God the staff of MTS–MI, would you include the seminary's professors in your prayer time? Thank you for praying for the ministry of Raju Kunjummen, Eugene Mayhew, Eric Moore, John Restum, and Brian Tucker.

Judgment and Salvation

In their song "Warrior," the band Caedmon's Call reflects on the significance of the Lord being the one who fights our battles. "To those who put their trust in Him / He gives strength unto His people . . . / The Angel of the Lord camps around the ones who fear Him / and delivers them."

God delivered His people through the wilderness, across the Jordan, and finally into the Promised Land. But when Joshua asked God how they were going to go about conquering their first city, His explanation must have seemed strange. There would be no frontal assault or laying siege to the walls. Rather, the Lord would bring about its downfall in His own way, by His might.

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

While it would have been easy to do, to Joshua's credit, the text does not indicate that he questioned God's plan (vv. 2–6). But then again, Joshua had seen the Lord accomplish miraculous feats before in their journey out of Egypt, His provision in the wilderness, and their amazing entrance into the Promised Land. This should remind us that we have a record of all of these events as well, and yet we often fail to trust God to bring about judgment and salvation in His way.

The downfall of Jericho brought both God's judgment on those in Jericho and deliverance for the Israelites, who would have faced heavy casualties if forced to breach the walls on their own, and for Rahab, the prostitute who had been faithful to keep her word to the spies. She experienced God's salvation, as well as all of those who trusted her word and remained in her house (v. 23). God's ways truly are higher and better than what we can possibly plan.

Apply the Word

Are there any walls in your life that you long to see come tumbling down? As Scripture says, it is not by might or power but by God's Spirit that His will is accomplished (Zech. 4:6). His deliverance might not come through the people or the tactics that you expect. But just as God faithfully brought salvation to Rahab, He will be with you.

Pray with Us

As students of MTS–MI receive their diplomas during Commencement today, we use this occasion to thank the Lord for these ministry leaders, as well as for the Student Services staff headed by Paul Wilson.

The Cost of Sin

In Guy de Maupassant's short story "The Necklace," a young woman ruins her life and the life of her loving husband when she covets the lifestyle of the rich and famous. Ironically, given the themes in that story, de Maupassant summed up the results of a life of covetousness in his epitaph, which he penned himself: "I have coveted everything and taken pleasure in nothing."

> For the wages of sin is death.
>
> Romans 6:23

Coveting can cost us everything. The seriousness of this sin is underscored by its inclusion in the Ten Commandments: "You shall not covet your neighbor's house …" (Ex. 20:17). Achan's sin was not a petty matter. His covetousness led him to steal from God—the goods that he took were dedicated for the Lord's purposes (v. 1). He also caused the death of thirty-six other people when they went up to attack the city of Ai (v. 5). Lest we think that covetousness is only a sin during the Old Testament times, the early church faced a similar situation with Ananias and Sapphira when they sold a piece of property and intentionally kept part of the money for themselves (see Acts 5:1–11).

In the cases of both Achan and Ananias and Sapphira, there seems to have been an opportunity for repentance. Achan had all night to think about his sin and come forward (vv. 13–14), and he could have admitted his guilt at any point during the vetting process (vv. 16–18). Instead, he waited to see if someone else might be called out for his sin, which deepened his own guilt and resulted in the destruction of not only himself but everything that belonged to him. The man who coveted a beautiful robe and some silver and gold ended losing his family, his animals, all his possessions, and his own life.

Apply the Word

We want to look like celebrities, think we deserve a car like our neighbor, and measure meaning and success through possessions. The story today is a reminder that covetousness destroys our relationships with God and others. Counteract our tendency to covet with Philippians 4:19: "My God will meet all your needs according to his riches of his glory in Christ Jesus."

Pray with Us

On this Mother's Day, let's praise God together for the importance He gives to mothers and motherhood. Let Jesus' care for His mother even on the cross, be an example for us all how to love those who raised us.

The Lord's Redemption

In the Battle of Teutoburg Forest, a Germanic war chief successfully attacked and destroyed three Roman legions, marking two major events in history. First, it remains one of the best examples of an ambush; and second, it was the defining battle that set the northern boundary of the Roman Empire at the Rhine River, shaping the next four hundred years of history before Rome's decline.

One of the greatest biblical examples of an ambush was enacted against the city of Ai. The Lord laid out a tactical battle plan to draw the fighting men out of the city while the Israelites feigned a retreat. Then a separate group of men stormed into the city and set it ablaze. When the Israelites finally took the city, they were instructed to plunder it and keep for themselves what they found. Their success was both a painful reminder and vindication of God's judgment for Achan's sin; God kept His promise of provision and redeemed their defeat that had come as a result of one man's sin.

> For I have delivered into your hands the king of Ai, his people, his city and his land.
>
> Joshua 8:1

Achan's sin brought about death and destruction. But the Lord used Joshua's leadership to bring victory and vindication to the Israelites.

This episode foreshadows the way that God used the life and death of Jesus to bring victory and salvation after Adam's Fall. Jesus provides the ultimate redemption for all who follow Him. When He died on the cross, He confounded all expectations for the Messiah, feigning defeat in death only to "ambush" Satan's plans through the victory of the resurrection.

If only Achan had obeyed the Lord's commands he could have enjoyed the plunder of Ai. By trying to help himself to blessings instead of waiting for God's timing, he lost everything. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection secures our salvation and the blessing of a relationship with God. This is the only way to be set free!

Apply the Word

Have you tried to have a good life apart from Christ? Trust Him today! He offers freedom from the chokehold of sin, an eternity in fellowship with God, blessings of peace and joy, forgiveness for all our failures, and the presence of the Holy Spirit. A life with Jesus is more valuable than any earthly treasure. To learn more, ask a pastor or Christian friend, or call 1-888-NEED HIM.

Pray with Us

We rely on Moody's Operations departments to function in unity and cohesion. Today, as we pray for Steven Mogck, executive VP and chief operating officer, and his teams, we thank God for their ministry that makes it possible.

A Failure of Intelligence

Arguably the best-known ruse in mythology is the Trojan Horse. Greeks who were attacking the city of Troy appeared to abandon their siege and left behind a massive wooden horse. Those at Troy figured that is was gift to them and brought the horse into the city—only to have the Greek soldiers hiding within sneak out and open the city gates for their army lying in wait outside.

The Gibeonites used a ruse to trick the Israelites, and their deception was no less costly. Instead of being able to inhabit their important cities, the Israelites were forced to allow the Gibeonites to live among them and do menial tasks such as cutting wood and carrying water. This may seem like a good deal for the Israelites at first glance—they did not have to fight these people and would have free laborers. But we know that later on groups like the Gibeonites would lead Israel away from the worship of God in favor of their local pagan deities. In addition, these people would probably have been easily conquered, allowing Israel to fulfill God's command to inhabit the land. The Israelites grumbled against their leaders when they found out the true location of the Gibeonites (vv. 16–18).

> The Israelites sampled their provisions but did not inquire of the LORD.
>
> Joshua 9:14

The text is clear that the leaders relied on their own wisdom, drawing conclusions based on what they observed without seeking guidance from the Lord. They fell for the Gibeonites' deception hook, line, and sinker—or in this case, by wine bag, sandals, and moldy bread (vv. 4–5).

It is easy to base decisions on first appearances. We should learn from this account of the Gibeonites and remember how important it is to inquire of the Lord, seeking wisdom that goes beyond human understanding. He has promised to give it generously (James 1:5).

Apply the Word

Solomon's prayer in 2 Chronicles 1 is a wonderful example for all of us: "Give me wisdom and knowledge." Whether or not you are facing a major decision, this is always an important prayer, and one that God honors. Don't fall for the tricks of this world that try to deceive you into settling for a truce instead of claiming the victory that God has promised.

Pray with Us

For the next three days, join us in prayer for the Integrated Marketing Communications department. As we pray for Rhonda AuYeung, Julia Baad, Annie Bolger, and Mollie Bond, ask for God's love and peace in their lives and for His guidance in their work.

The Heavens Wage War

The damage caused by hail has been well documented. In the United States alone, hail causes more than $1 billion worth of damage annually. One of the worst hailstorms ever occurred in India in 1888 when over 250 people and 1,600 animals died as a result.

In our passage today, notice all the specific instances in which God was fighting the battle alongside Israel. First, He caused confusion in the ranks for the five kings who attacked Gibeon (v. 10). Then as they fled, He poured out hail on them. In ancient times, anything out of the ordinary that occurred in the sky was viewed as an omen, a warning from above. Hail would certainly have been seen as a curse sent from the heavens, and God used hail to bring about more death and destruction than that caused by the swords of the Israelites (v. 11).

> There has never been a day like it before or since.
>
> Joshua 10:14

More impressive than the hail, however, were the other elements in the sky and their actions that day. Scripture tells us that both the sun and moon stopped! Finally, we see that the Lord moved in a miraculous way to allow the Israelites to chase their enemies with the aid of more light (vv. 12–14).

This account of confusion, hail, and unexpected trajectory of the sun is intended to demonstrate how Israel's success in battle was the result of God's supernatural work, not their own military superiority. Israel was called to obey the true God, the Maker and ultimate authority over the heavens and the earth. When they did, He showed up to deliver them in a jaw-dropping way. Their success was not by their own might, or even the might of the heavens, but "because the LORD the God of Israel, fought for Israel" (v. 42).

Apply the Word

God made the sun stand still for Joshua. Jesus stilled the wind and waves (Mark 4:35-40). We serve this same God! His power to save has not been diminished; His care for His people remains true. When you watch or read your next weather report, take that as an opportunity to praise God who oversees the sun, moon, and stars and who is Master of sky and sea.

Pray with Us

IMC's Brian Regnerus, Nicole Johnson, Kevin Mungons, Elena Mafter, and Linda Piepenbrink provide content and editorial oversight for Moody's communication materials.
As you pray, would you ask for creativity and good teamwork.

Total Destruction

Through nuclear weapons, humanity has developed the ability to bring total destruction on numerous cities, and possibly even destroy civilization as we know it, depending on the severity of the fallout. The most powerful nuclear weapon test to date occurred in the former Soviet Union in 1961, where a bomb nicknamed Tsar Bomba produced over 3,000 times more power than the ones dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War II.

> Joshua totally destroyed them and their towns.
>
> Joshua 11:21

Controversy over the capacity for destruction isn't isolated to the debate about nuclear weapons. A phrase that has proved contentious and controversial shows up three times in our reading today (vv. 12, 20, 21). In English, the Hebrew term *herem* (or *cherem*) is often translated as "utterly destroy," "totally destroy," or "devote to destruction," and it has been problematic for both translators and theologians alike. How could God call the Israelites to "totally destroy [the Canaanites], not sparing anyone that breathed" (v. 11)?

We must learn to hold together the paradoxical truths that the "LORD is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion," as well as the second part of Numbers 14:18: "yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished." God had given the Canaanites and others in the land at least 400 years to repent and seek the God of Israel. And they had much from which to repent: their culture was characterized by idolatry, prostitution as part of worship, and the practice of offering children as sacrifices to appease their gods.

In this time and place, God used the people of Israel as the instruments of His justice. And as we saw with Rahab, mercy was available for those who decided to follow the God of Israel. The Lord was dealing with the sin that had infected the land. Ultimately, the process of removing the Canaanites from the land was an expression of God's holiness and justice, mercy and wrath, patience and judgment.

Apply the Word

How have you experienced God's holiness, justice, and mercy in your own life? If you are convicted about sin that you've been holding on to, take time now to repent and confess that before the Lord and ask for forgiveness. If you've had times of God's correction and restoration, thank Him for His mercy that seeks to purify us and draw us closer. This could be a testimony to share with others.

Pray with Us

Concluding our prayers for the IMC department today, please mention Larry Bohlin, Lynn Gabalec, Jamie Janosz, and Katie Fore during your prayer time. May they always seek God in their lives and have a steadfast walk with Him.

Question and Answer

By Dr. Winfred O. Neely, Professor of Preaching and Pastoral Studies

Q **What does the word *behold* mean?**

A The Hebrew word *hinneh*, which is translated as "behold" or "look" in English, serves several important functions in Old Testament Scripture. First, it highlights for the reader the significance of the content that follows it. The biblical writer's use of *behold* signals that what a biblical character in a historical narrative sees or experiences immediately after *behold* is very important (see Gen. 22:13; Ex. 3:2). Second, the biblical writer's use of *behold* also alerts readers that the upcoming narrative is very important (1 Sam. 4:3; Prov. 1:23).

Due to the influence of Hebrew idioms on the New Testament writers, we see *behold* (the Greek word *idou*) in the New Testament. The main function is the same. For example, when God's purpose of grace is consummated and He makes His dwelling among redeemed and glorified humanity, John wants to signal to us the wonder and utter importance of this event. Indeed a voice from heaven prefaces the occurrence of this great reality with "Behold" or "Look!" (Rev. 21:3–4). To learn more about the use of this word, a concordance is a valuable tool. You could start by looking up the statements and events prefaced with *behold* in the book of Revelation.

Q **Why does the narrator of 1 Samuel introduce Elkanah to us by tracing his pedigree back four generations?**

A Elkanah, Hannah's husband, is introduced as "Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu, the son of Zuph, an Ephraimite" (1:1). The words do trace his pedigree back four generations, naming his father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and great- great-grandfather. But these words are also Elkanah's full name. Do you remember the film *Ben Hur*? *Ben* is the Hebrew word for "son." Ben Hur means Son of Hur. I will write out Elkanah's name with the Hebrew word *ben*. It will then become apparent that this is his name: Elkanah ben Jeroham ben Elihu ben Tohu ben Zuph. In the ancient Near East, a person's full name showed their connection to their fathers and grandfathers. Elkanah's long name indicates his pedigree and also shows that he is a prominent man, a product of legacy.

Q **Why do some consider Hannah to be one of the most pious women in the Old Testament?**

A Hannah, the wife of Elkanah, the mother of Samuel, suffered for years because of her infertility and painful family life (1 Sam. 1:3–7)! Her well-intentioned husband misunderstood her (1:8). But

Continued on next page

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Hannah's pain drove her to take her problem to the Lord in prayer (1:10–11). She is the only woman in the Old Testament depicted as praying; she is the only woman whose vow is narrated in Scripture; she is the first person in Scripture to address God as the Lord of hosts. After prayer her face was no longer sad (1:18), indicating the Lord's deep work in her soul. She kept her promise to God and dedicated Samuel to the Lord (1:26–28). Samuel became one of the most effective prophets in Israel's history (3:19–21), the one who anointed the first two kings of Israel (10:1; 16:13). Hannah's prayer of rejoicing reaches almost one thousand years in the future and informs Mary's prayer in the New Testament (2:1–10; Luke 1:46–55). To this day Hannah stands as a model to be followed.

I was reading in 1 Samuel 1 and noticed that Hannah alone dedicated Samuel to the Lord. Elkanah appears to be passive in the decision. Can you clarify matters?

The narrator of Samuel does not write much about Elkanah's role in the dedication of Samuel. The narrator's focus is on Hannah. Hannah makes the vow. Under the law, however, when a married woman made a vow, her husband had to confirm it. If the husband did not confirm the vow, the vow was not valid (Num. 30:1–16). While the narrator does not say directly that Elkanah confirmed the vow, the sequence of events implies that he did. Elkanah is concerned about the matter, saying to Hannah, "May the LORD make good his word" (1:23). No doubt it was hard for him to dedicate the firstborn son of the woman he loved to the Lord. But husband and wife were one in this decision. The Lord rewarded their commitment (2:18–21).

Since we will live forever as Christians in heaven, won't we ever get tired of heaven?

We will never ever get tired of living in the new heaven and new earth! More importantly we will never ever get tired of the triune God of heaven! When our redeemed feet first step on the shores of glory, only then will we begin to understand the magnitude of what God has accomplished for us in Christ. It may take a few billion years to get over the initial wonder, if we ever get over it! The Lord will put us on display forever as trophies of His sovereign grace (Eph. 2:7). Our triune God's presence is so awesome and thrilling that after we have been in His presence billions of years we will not have begun to exhaust the wonder of His person and glory. Every moment in heaven will be wonderful—existential loneliness and weariness banished from our souls forever as we spend eternity in worship and service to the Lord (Revelation 21–22). Oh Lord, hasten the day!

An Account of Carnage

From ancient times to the present, empires have made records of the places and people groups they conquered. Some of the earliest examples of such names confirm the existence of place names in Scripture. They can be found inscribed on the walls of Egyptian temples, especially those found in the large temple complex at Karnak, which records towns dating to 1450 B.C.!

In a similar vein, the Israelites also wrote down those towns and groups that they conquered. While the place names may be foreign to us, they would have been and still are relevant for those familiar with the region. This record passed down to us includes real areas, real regions, real kingdoms, and real kings. Archeology continues to literally dig up the truths of the Bible, uncovering more places that Scripture described well before we had physical proof of their existence.

> Here is a list of the kings of the land that Joshua and the Israelites conquered on the west side of the Jordan.
>
> Joshua 12:7

This list occurs halfway through the book of Joshua, providing an opportunity to slow down and reflect on the outcome of the battles that God fought for Israel. Each instance of the name or a place is another fulfilled promise and another testimony to God's work on behalf of His people.

The placement of this list in the middle of the book also reminds us that the work is not finished. There were more battles to be fought. But it was still appropriate to pause and reflect on how God had worked so far for the Israelites. In times of trial, it is important to take note of the victories that God has given us, whether that is in re-reading lists such as these or having our own record written up in a journal. As one commentator noted, "Sometimes in the course of human experience it is good to sit down and reflect on what has been conquered by the grace of God."

Apply the Word

Take time this weekend to reflect on how God has won victories in your life. As you look at each item, thank the Lord for His work and commit yourself to trusting Him in the future. These lists don't mean that our work for Him is over, but they do remind us that He "who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion" (Phil. 1:6).

Pray with Us

Dr. Junias Venugopal, provost and dean of Education, oversees our Undergraduate, Seminary, and Distance Learning schools. Please uphold him in prayer and ask for good health, strength to carry the workload, and grace and wisdom in ministry.

Unfinished Business

Nearly a decade ago in 2006, Yahoo offered to purchase Facebook for $1 billion, but Facebook walked away from the deal. Sources say that if Yahoo had countered with a $1.1 billion offer, the Facebook board would have pressured founder Mark Zuckerberg to accept. It turned out to be a huge win for Facebook and loss for Yahoo: today Facebook has an estimated value of $200 billion.

> But the Israelites did not drive out the people.
>
> Joshua 13:13

The people of Israel also failed to seal the deal and completely drive out the people of the land. This failure allowed the Canaanites to influence the Israelites and eventually persuade them to follow idolatrous ways (see Judg.1:21–33).

But all is not gloomy in our text today. Within this recounting of the division of the land we can find several notes of encouragement. First, the Israelites finally dealt decisively with Balaam (v. 22). As you might recall from Numbers 22 through 24, Balaam was a prophet for hire who was paid to curse Israel. God would not allow him to utter the curse, so he settled on recommending intermarriage to Balak, the king of Moab, so that the Israelites would be turned away from God.

Second, we see that the promise of the inheritance of the land is starting to be fulfilled. It serves as a refrain throughout this passage: "These towns and villages were the inheritance" (vv. 23, 28). The people had not perfectly obeyed the commands of the Lord, but they were still given portions of the land for their families and tribes. Finally, God's provision for the Levites encourages us. As the priestly tribe, Levi was not assigned any particular land. This could have been terrifying to live without their own territory, but instead they received the assurance that "The LORD, the God of Israel, is their inheritance, as he promised them" (v. 33).

Apply the Word

It's worth contemplating what inheritance you will leave your loved ones. Not a financial inheritance—for some of us, that would be a paltry gift. A spiritual inheritance is far more valuable. Do they know about your faithful prayers for them? Perhaps the gift of your Bible or spiritual journal with your notes? A legacy like this is worth more than real estate and bank accounts.

Pray with Us

It's a joy and a privilege for us to pray every month for our students. Today is Commencement Day on Moody's Chicago campus, and as our students receive their diplomas, please join us in prayer for this generation's work for the gospel.

Strength in Age

D. L. Moody, the great evangelist, preacher, and founder of Moody Bible Institute, said this about retirement: "Preparation for old age should begin not later than one's teens. A life which is empty of purpose until 65 will not suddenly become filled on retirement."

As we continue to read about the allotment of land to the Israelite tribes, we have moved now to the west side of the Jordan River. Interestingly, the text does not detail which tribe receives which portions, as we saw yesterday. Instead, the focus is on one man: Caleb.

> So here I am today, eighty-five years old! I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out.
>
> Joshua 14:10–11

If you've forgotten the details from Caleb's story, take a few minutes to review Numbers 13 and 14. Chosen as one of the Israelites to survey the Promised Land, he and Joshua were the only two to urge the people to enter the land, trust God, and act in faith and not fear. His speech to the people is one of the great exhortations in Scripture: "If the LORD is pleased with us, he will lead us into the land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will devour them. Their protection is gone, but the LORD is with us. Do not be afraid of them" (Num. 14:8–9).

Now God had in fact delivered on his promise—Caleb had entered the land and would receive his inheritance. And Caleb demonstrated that his faith in the Lord was still strong and vibrant; he had known for decades that giants roamed the land, and he had also known that God was greater than giants. He requested the hill country of the Anakites, determined to drive them out with the help of the Lord.

Apply the Word

God doesn't promise a life free from "giants." He does promise to be with us when we confront them. What giants are testing your faith and obedience? What would it mean to make choices out of faith in God's promise instead of fear of the giants? May we like Caleb trust the Lord wholeheartedly so that we see opportunities for obedience instead of obstacles.

Pray with Us

Would you mention while you pray today our Telecommunications staff: Scott Schaeffer and Daniel Schombert? They serve at Moody in Chicago maintaining and updating our phone system. Thank God in prayer for their faithful service.

Borders and a Match

The plot of many fairy tales revolves around the challenges of finding true love. Cinderella loses her glass slipper, forcing the prince to search the land to find her. Rapunzel and her prince are finally reunited in the wilderness after she has lost her hair and he has lost his sight. In *The Princess Bride*, Westley finally rescues Buttercup from an impending marriage to evil Prince Humperdinck. The recurring theme is that true love will encounter obstacles and overcome them.

> Othniel son of Kenaz, Caleb's brother, took it; so Caleb gave his daughter Aksah to him in marriage.
>
> Joshua 15:17

Our reading today includes the first marriage to be mentioned in the book of Joshua. Caleb continued to demonstrate his courage and obedience, defeating the Anakites in the land he had been given. He then promised to give his daughter Aksah in marriage to the man who would capture the town of Kiriath Sepher (v. 16). This was no easy feat! Othniel, however, rose to the challenge. As we'll see, Othniel was a man of not only courage but also discernment, and he knew Aksah was worth fighting for.

Aksah was a woman of discernment and action. Caleb had given his daughter and son-in-law land in the Negev Desert. While it was a blessing to have been given part of the territory as their own inheritance, Aksah knew that property in the desert was also going to need water in order to be productive. She took the initiative to ask her father for an additional gift of springs—which he granted (v. 19).

The story of Othniel and Aksah is repeated in the book of Judges, and there we also learn that Othniel became the first judge over Israel after Joshua's death (see Judg. 1:9–15; 3:7–11). During the four decades of his leadership, the people had peace from their enemies. God used the wisdom and courage of Othniel to bless all of Israel.

Apply the Word

Godly wisdom knows when to wait and when to take action. God often uses our initiative, boldness, and assertiveness to accomplish His will. If you need to fight on behalf of a loved one or make a request for something that will bless your family, seek the Lord's guidance and then act in faith. God may use your courage to bring about blessings for others that exceed your imagination.

Pray with Us

Pastors' Conference begins today. It is a wonderful time for many pastors across the country to come to Moody for teaching and encouragement. Pray for Dr. Paul Nyquist, Moody's president, who hosts the conference and speaks at today's session.

Seen and Unseen

Bacteria often have a bad reputation, but these microscopic, single-celled organisms have many benefits. They have been used for thousands of years to ferment liquids and foods—including bread, yogurt, cheese, wine, vinegar, kimchi, and sauerkraut—as well as aiding in the production of chemicals, the tanning of hides for leather—even the treatment of sewage!

The smallest things sometimes have tremendous importance. Our text today lists the major cities that were part of the inheritance of Judah. Lachish was a major fortress city in the interior of Judea that guarded the main mountain pass that led to Jerusalem. Ziklag hosted David while he sought refuge from King Saul, and he won a major victory over the Amalekites when they destroyed the city and took his family hostage (see 1 Samuel 30).

> God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.
>
> 1 Corinthians 1:27

Ekron, another significant city, eventually fell to the Philistines, and was the last place of refuge for the Ark of the Covenant before it was sent back to Israel (see 1 Sam. 5:1; 6:1–8). The city of Ashdod is also mentioned in the account of the Philistine capture of the ark. It is one of the oldest cities in the world and continues to play a significant role in the modern nation of Israel; it boasts the country's largest port and fifth-largest population.

The towns and geography mentioned in this passage became the stage for so much of Israel's national life. Important battles, ceremonies, and people would come from these places. One town in this region that isn't mentioned in this passage is Bethlehem, a small town that would eventually be the place of one of the greatest moments in all of human history: the place where Jesus—the Son of God, the Messiah, our Savior—was born.

Apply the Word

The battles that you are fighting today might result in blessings and benefits that you may never know—but those who come after you will be transformed. No one in Judah likely imagined that the small, backwater territory that they conquered would become the home of the Son of God! Take courage, for God might be working through you to do something amazing.

Pray with Us

As the head of the media ministries at Moody, Greg Thornton, senior vice president of Media, plays a vital role in the annual Pastors' Conference held now on our Chicago campus. He will appreciate your prayer support.

Dislodging Sin

After the devastation of The Great War, usually called World War I in America, the Irish poet William Butler Yeats penned the short poem "The Second Coming." In it, he described a world in which "The falcon cannot hear the falconer; / Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold."

The final verse of chapter 15 sounds a somber note. Judah could not remove the Jebusites from the land. The final verse of chapter 16 echoes that same note: Ephraim also failed to dislodge the Canaanites from their territory. These failures would eventually lead to war, bondage, suffering, intermarriage, idolatry, and God's judgment (see Judg. 2:10–23).

> Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles.
>
> Hebrews 12:1

These short verses might tempt us to think that these failures were minor, small errors that allowed the Canaanites to live among the tribes and do work for them. But these somber notes keep recurring throughout the book of Joshua, alerting us through repetition that danger lurks on the horizon for Israel. These verses set the stage for the unfolding of events chronicled in the book of Judges.

Disobedience to God's commands is costly. It is a lesson that we, like the people of Israel, often have to learn over and over again. We are tempted to believe that small errors are not such a big deal; a little cutting corners won't hurt anything; maybe God didn't really mean what He said. It's a lie that has been present since the serpent tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden with the question, "Did God really say …?" (Gen. 3:1). The truth is that all disobedience is sin, and all of us are guilty (Rom. 3:23).

Thankfully, just as God was faithful to His promises to the Israelites, even through their disobedience and the resulting consequences, so He also loves us and has provided a way for us to be forgiven from our sins and restored to relationship with Him (1 John 1:9).

Apply the Word

God has also provided us with the Holy Spirit. Like the falcon and falconer in Yeats's poem, when we do not listen to the direction of the Holy Spirit we fly out of control, losing our way, drifting out of the center of God's will. Spend time in prayer today asking the Lord to show you any places of disobedience to confess, and ask the Spirit to guide your steps.

Pray with Us

Our Satellite Network staff—Sam Beiruti, Peter Dhuse, Tracy Haney, Eric Hufford, Phil Shappard, and Tom Svoboda—work hard to enhance Moody Radio's life-changing ministry. They will be grateful for your prayers today.

A Stubborn People

As one commentator has said, "Complaining is dangerous business. It can damage or even destroy your relationship with God, your relationships with other people, and even your relationship with yourself." The adage that "misery loves company" doesn't also note that eventually everyone tires of being around a complainer.

Our desire to complain often results from a frustrated and thankless heart. We compare ourselves to others and wonder why God has not blessed us in the same way, failing to see the many gifts and fulfilled promises in our lives. The Israelites had repeated cycles of complaining, from their grumblings under Moses, their lack of faith resulting in a journey that should have taken eleven days to forty years (see Exodus 16, Deuteronomy 1), to their complaining in our reading today (see especially v. 14).

> Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure.
>
> Philippians 2:14–15

The half tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh were not satisfied with their inheritance—although it's important to note that neither tribe dislodged the Canaanites from their territory (see 16:10, 17:12). They complained to Joshua that they needed yet more land. Joshua responded that they could clear the forests of the Perizzites and gain more land. Notice how their response reveals the deep root of fear, dissatisfaction, and complaining. The hill country still won't be enough! And besides, those people have iron chariots!

Joshua provides an excellent model for leadership in this situation. He had heard their complaint and offered a solution. When they rejected his solution, he held firm, repeating how this offer was actually a greater blessing than what they had initially been given. Finally, he tried to reorient their perspective to what was possible with God's help: "though they are strong, you can drive them out" (v. 18). With encouragement from their leader and a reminder that God was with them, they should have rejoiced.

Apply the Word

Complaining can so easily become a habit in our lives. If you struggle with this, review 1 Thessalonians 6:16–18: "Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." There is no better antidote to fear, lack of contentment, or complaining than rejoicing, praying, and giving thanks to God!

Pray with Us

Please include in your prayers our Health Service staff—Catherine Cates and Ann Meyer—who take good care of students and staff on campus in Chicago. We thank God for their knowledge and skills in helping those in need of medical attention.

Taking Possession of the Land

Alaskans celebrate the official state holiday known as Seward's Day on the last Monday in March. The holiday is named after Secretary of State William Seward who negotiated the purchase of Alaska from Russia in 1867. Ridiculed by many people at the time as "Seward's Folly," America's purchase of Alaska turned out to be a lucrative investment, yielding great returns in natural resources from gold to oil to fishing. And of course, Alaska also boasts some of the most beautiful scenery in the country!

> How long will you wait before you begin to take possession of the land that the LORD . . . has given you?
>
> Joshua 18:3

Today we'll begin the final segment of our study, Finishing the Battle Well. Our reading today introduces the final apportionment of the land to the remaining tribes. Five tribes had received their inheritance: Judah, Gad, Reuben, the half tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, and the Levites. The text restates that the inheritance of the Levites was not land—it was their gift to serve as priests before the Lord (v. 7).

At this point, the land was by and large under the control of Israel (v. 1). But the remaining tribes had yet to settle on their portions of the territory. There's a hint of frustration in Joshua's question in verse 3, our key verse for today. What were they waiting for? The land was under their control—it was time to claim their inheritance that God had promised and delivered to them.

Under Joshua's leadership, a surveying crew for the Promised Land was appointed. They would present a detailed geographical study of the land, and then Joshua would draw lots for them to divide it up. That way each tribe would know exactly what was being given, and they would all know the resources available throughout the entire land, not just in their own particular territory. In this way, they could take possession of the gift God had given.

Apply the Word

God has given every believer gifts to use for His service. He has given us the Holy Spirit to dwell within us. He has kept His promises to us. Are we putting these gifts into practice, "claiming the inheritance" that is ours through faith in Jesus? Allow Joshua's question today to stir up your passion to work for the kingdom of God.

Pray with Us

Today and tomorrow our prayers go to God for the ministry of Moody Aviation in Spokane, WA. Lift up in prayer Cecil Bedford, Jodi Appleby, and James Conrad and thank God for their contribution to training missionary pilots and mechanics.

A Godly Inheritance

Sergey Sudev was a journalism student in Komrat, Moldova. Like many students, he was just trying to get through his courses and then hoped to find work. Then came a knock on his door that changed his life. His uncle in Germany, whom Sergey had not seen for a decade, had died, and he had listed Sergey as the recipient of his assets—950 million euros. In response to the news that he was now one of the wealthiest men in Moldova, Sergey reportedly said, "Is this a joke?"

> Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance.
>
> Hebrews 9:15

Inheritance is the theme of our reading today. Passages like this can often seem a bit boring, like trying to comb through an accounting textbook or list of legal transactions to find a good story. But if we've been paying attention to the story in the book of Joshua so far, we can read this text with interest. The refrain rings out again and again: a tribe has received their inheritance.

From the time of Abraham, the Lord had promised the people a specific land, and in Joshua's conquests, it was finally coming to pass (see Gen. 12:1–3). They had left the land centuries earlier because of famine; they found refuge and then enslavement in Egypt. Now they were returning home. Each of the thirteen times that we read the word *inheritance* in our text today, we should see the faithfulness of God in the background.

Christians also have a promised inheritance, and a place where we too will finally be at rest. In many New Testament passages, we are encouraged to continue on the path of righteousness and obedience so that we might receive the inheritance of the kingdom as our reward (Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:23–24, 1 Peter 1:3–4). Just as God was faithful to bring the tribes of Israel into their promised inheritance, so too He will be faithful to us.

Apply the Word

The theme of inheritance in the New Testament is one that will yield great spiritual riches. Read the passages mentioned above, as well as the book of Hebrews, to get a better understanding of God's promises to us. We can rejoice that we will experience eternal rest, a new heavens and new earth, and unbroken fellowship with God.

Pray with Us

Today we celebrate the graduation of Moody Aviation class of 2015. As students participate in the Commencement ceremony, please remember in prayer their Flight and Airframe Power Plant instructors: Ian Kerrigan, Jay Bigley, and Greg Heller.

The End of the Beginning

At the conclusion of a decisive battle in the North African campaign during World War II, Winston Churchill famously declared that the victory secured by Great Britain and the Allies was not the beginning of the end, "But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning."

Similarly, the end of the division of the land and the allotment of the inheritance seems like a natural ending point for the long, arduous journey of the Israelites, both in this book and within the larger context of their struggle. Yet this book, as well as the rest of the biblical account, have much to say; we are really only at the "beginning of the end" of the book of Joshua.

> And so they finished dividing the land.
>
> Joshua 19:51

The Hebrew name of Joshua's town, Timnath-Serah, signifies a portion of abundance. He was able to build up the town and settle in it, seemingly without any need to conquer and dislodge any of the inhabitants living there (vv. 49–50). The final division of the land had been done by casting lots, a traditional way of making decisions that showed that God was in charge of the outcome, not the biased or corrupt perspectives of man. In this case, the priest Eleazar, the tribal leaders, and the military leader Joshua all participated in the decision. Their coming together for this important matter demonstrated their unity; the fact that they did this "in the presence of the LORD" demonstrated their humility before God (v. 51).

Although the task of dividing the land had been completed, the final task of purging the land was not over. While some may interpret this event as a time to settle down, it should be viewed simply as the end of the beginning. This was not a time for complacency but for courage.

Apply the Word

The process of making decisions can be fraught with tension and anxiety for us, whether it's in the home, the church, or the workplace. If you, your loved ones, or your leaders are facing decisions, the model provided in our reading can be helpful. Seek the Lord's wisdom, gather expertise from different areas, and approach each other and the decision with humility.

Pray with Us

Today, we invite you to uphold in prayer the ministry of our Stewardship department headed by vice president Jim Elliott. We appreciate their hard work and dedication, as they raise funds for Moody Global Ministries.

Hope for the Hopeless

Matt was three months away from graduation when two older kids asked him to help them as a lookout. He didn't know what their plan was, but he also knew he didn't want them to beat him up. He stood on the corner while they went into a store, and then he heard gunshots. They came running out of the store, and Matt ran home as fast as he could. On the news that night he saw that the two were wanted for double homicide. Just a few days later, police detectives showed up at his door, arrested him in front of his sobbing mother, and took him to jail. He was found guilty and served a ten-year sentence before being released for good behavior. Matt now travels to schools to talk to kids about peer pressure, staying focused on positive goals, and making good choices.

> What does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.
>
> Micah 6:8

Our reading today describes God's merciful provision for those who have killed another person as the result of an accident; the death had to be "unintentional and without malice aforethought" (v. 5). Before being received into the city, the guilty person had to state their case, be willing to stand trial to determine if it really was an accident, and accept the rulings of the elders. The city was supposed to provide a place to live and protect the accused. There was even a specific time given for how long the accused were supposed to stay in the city (v. 6).

The cities of refuge were spread throughout the land, so that one would be fairly close to anyone who might need protection from someone seeking to avenge a relative's death. These cities are examples of God's love, mercy, and justice—which extended even to foreigners living in Israel (v. 9).

Apply the Word

How can your church help provide safe places for people in need? Is there a local rescue mission or shelter for women fleeing domestic violence that you can support, either financially or through volunteering? Does your church welcome people with disabilities, helping meet their needs and provide opportunities for them to worship? See how you can provide shelter in your community.

Pray with Us

Today we have the opportunity to encourage in prayer the Moody trustees, whose names are listed on page 5 of this issue. They give their time, efforts, talents, and knowledge to Moody, and we ask God to bless their ministry and their leadership.

The Fight for a Fair Share

A Gallup poll at the end of 2013 asked Americans who they regarded as the most honest and ethical person in their lives and gave them a range of professions from which to choose. Clergy were rated in seventh place out of twenty-two professions, behind nurses, pharmacists, grade-school teachers, medical doctors, military officers, and police officers. Only 47 percent of Americans rated clergy highly for honesty and ethics, compared to 82 percent saying the same about nurses.

> The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching.
>
> 1 Timothy 5:17

This poll did not explore the reasons behind the low ranking for pastors. One likely cause (among others) is the declining respect for the church and those called to ministry. From the Old Testament to the New, Scripture is clear that those who are called to serve the Lord as their vocational ministry are worthy of the support of God's people.

Our reading today describes how towns were allotted to the tribe of Levi. We've noted before that this tribe was not given their own territory, for their inheritance was service to the Lord. But as a practical matter, the priests still needed a place to live and a way to take care of their livestock and provide for their families (v. 2)! Lots were cast to allocate cities for the Levite families.

First, note that the cities were scattered throughout the land given to the other tribes. The priests were not intended to be isolated in a "holy huddle" separate from the people to whom they ministered. All told, they received 48 towns and the surrounding pastureland for their flocks (v. 41).

Second, the coda to this chapter in verses 43 to 45 is a beautiful note of praise to God's faithfulness. The Lord had given the people the land, and they were taking possession of it. "Not one of all the LORD's good promises to the house of Israel failed; every one was fulfilled."

Apply the Word

The New Testament reminds us to care for our ministers. Take a moment to read 1 Timothy 5:17–18, 1 Corinthians 9:14, Galatians 6:6, and Luke 10:7. Pray for the leaders in your church and think of a way you can encourage them. Ideas include sending a letter or email of appreciation, giving a gift card so the family can enjoy a meal out, or offering to help in an understaffed ministry.

Pray with Us

Dr. John Jelinek, vice president and dean of Moody Theological Seminary, welcomes the prayers of the *Today in the Word* family for the training of Christian leaders at MTS's two campuses in Chicago and Michigan.

Homecoming

The term *homecoming* has its historical roots in England, where the term originally described the visit of natives to their home on the Isle of Man. In America, homecoming as we know it became popular in the early twentieth century when college alumni would "come home" to their alma mater. This was usually focused on a football game, and by the 1930s many high schools had begun the practice and added a dance as well.

Homecomings are great times of remembrance and reconnecting, of sharing stories and seeing God's work in the life of old friends. For the Israelites, their homecoming must have been quite a memorable event!

Having left their families and loved ones behind, the men who were capable of fighting had crossed over the Jordan River to assist their brothers in conquering the Promised Land. Now that the Lord had granted them peace (v. 4), Joshua blessed them and sent them on their way. They were encouraged to return home with the great wealth that they had plundered, not only in the form of precious metals such as silver and gold but also useful metals such as bronze and iron as well as the large herds of animals (v. 8).

> Joshua blessed them and sent them away, and they went to their homes.
>
> Joshua 22:6

As a part of his blessing, Joshua encouraged the Israelites to do something that continues to be a part of the celebrations at many homecomings to this day: giving to others. Like fundraisers held by schools who celebrate homecoming, the Israelites were to share the plunder with those who had not been able to go into battle to possess the land. As we've seen in our readings this week, the concern for justice for all in society continues to be a theme in these closing chapters in the book of Joshua.

Apply the Word

We are looking forward to the great homecoming when God will provide all who believe in Him with resurrected life and we will dwell with Him forever! As we wait for that glorious, blessed day, our gatherings with loved ones here on earth provide a foretaste of that joy to come. Consider inviting friends or family that you haven't seen for a while to share a meal and enjoy being together.

Pray with Us

Would you put on your prayer list the staff of the Underwriting department—Calvin Robinson and George Brown? Pray that they will follow God's leading in seeking godly partnerships to enhance financial support for Moody Radio.

Battle over Misunderstanding

In the short story "The King and His Hawk" as retold by James Baldwin, the Mongol ruler Genghis Khan greatly misunderstood his hawk. When Khan tried to drink water from a stream, the hawk knocked the cup out of his hand. Finally Khan struck the bird with his sword. But he had lost his cup and was forced to climb up to reach the spring—where he found a dead poisonous snake polluting the source. The hawk that he killed had been trying to warn him, and by knocking away his cup it had saved his life.

> Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.
>
> James 1:19

As our text today begins, the tribes were obeying Joshua's instruction to return home. The Reubenites, Gadites, and half tribe of Manasseh decided to put a large altar in their territory. Remember that these tribes were given land on the other side of the Jordan River.

When the rest of Israel heard about the altar, they assumed that these tribes were signaling rebellion against God, and they decided to go to war. They were zealous to maintain the relationship with God—and they remembered the lessons of Peor and Achan (vv. 17, 20). If part of Israel was in rebellion against God, they could all suffer. Thankfully, before they actually attacked, they sent the priest and tribal leaders to find out what was going on.

The tribes on the other side of the Jordan were not trying to establish alternative worship after all. In fact, their altar was intended to signal their allegiance to the God of Israel, even though they were geographically separated from the rest of the tribes by the Jordan River. This news provided an occasion to praise God for sparing the Israelites from His wrath or a civil war (v. 33), and the altar was a testimony that the LORD was God.

Apply the Word

The Israelites took the time to discover the truth before making a rash decision to launch a civil war. This is a good reminder to us that our rush to judgment of other Christians is often not informed by the facts of a situation. Rather than gossip, slander, or ostracize a brother or sister in Christ, we should prayerfully try to discern the truth and pray that unity will be maintained.

Pray with Us

We invite you to pray for Dr. James Spencer, VP and Dean of Moody Distance Learning, as he leads his teams in reaching thousands of learners across the country with the truth of God's Word over the Internet and Regional Classrooms.

The Lord's Good Promises

The State of the Union address has become an opportunity for the President of the United States to address the joint session of Congress and millions of viewers on television and state the administration's proposals and promises for the future. Some of these proposals are enacted, but not a single president has ever fulfilled every promise made during that speech.

Unlike presidents—or any human beings—God has a perfect track record of keeping His promises. The book of Joshua repeatedly celebrates the power and faithfulness of God to deliver His people into the inheritance He had promised them.

> You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the LORD your God gave you has failed.
>
> Joshua 23:14

In his closing speech to the leaders of the Israelites, Joshua wanted to remind the people of what God had done. Notably, Joshua did not take this opportunity to promote his own accomplishments. The focus is on God: He fought for them (v. 3); He defeated their enemies (v. 9); He has kept His promises (v. 14).

Now the question was whether the people would follow through on their end of the agreement. Joshua used this opportunity to remind and warn them that if they violated the covenant (vv. 6, 12, 13, 16), the Lord would no longer drive out the survivors of the once powerful nations, and the Israelites would perish in the land (vv. 13, 16). In particular, Joshua tried to impress on them the dire consequences of idolatry (v. 7).

Joshua urged the leaders to obey God's instructions to them in the Law (v. 6), hold fast to God (v. 8), and love the Lord (v. 11). Through obedience, trust, and love for God, the people would have the tools and the motivation to remain in a covenant relationship with the Lord who had delivered and protected them.

Apply the Word

We also need to remember God's promises: He will never leave us nor forsake us (Heb. 13:5); He is for us (Rom. 8:31); and when we have Christ, He is greater than anything we face in this world (1 John 4:4). When you are plagued by doubt, tempted to sin, or beset by fear, remember that God is still faithful and powerful and He will keep all His promises!

Pray with Us

Jacob Santhouse and Ryan Yoder in Exterior Maintenance serve faithfully on our Chicago campus keeping it clean and attractive, and the students, staff, and visitors notice it every day. Would you thank God in prayer for their work?

Whom to Serve

Congregations comprised of atheists have been growing, especially in the United States and United Kingdom. Over the past two years, monthly and in some cases weekly groups have formed in different cities. They follow a format similar to a church worship service, with songs and speakers as part of the event. These groups also come together to celebrate major milestones such as birth, coming of age, marriage, and death.

> Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve.
>
> Joshua 24:15

We are beings created to worship, even those who profess not to believe in any supernatural power. Joshua's challenge, spoken thousands of years ago, still rings true today. We will worship something—who or what will it be?

In the first half of our reading today, Joshua recounts the history of God's care for His people from the time of Abraham to the present. He stressed that their present blessing and inheritance was a gift from God, not the result of their own labors (v. 13). Would they serve Him?

The Israelites declared that they would—but entering into a relationship with the Lord is not something to be done frivolously. The Almighty is holy and jealous (v. 19). He would not tolerate a return to sin, especially not pagan idolatry, after He had done so much for His people. Sin would bring devastating consequences.

When we choose to put anything else other than God first in our life, we turn it into a god that competes for our devotion and service. Even things that are potentially good such as jobs, family, friends, physique, food, and children can become snares to true worship. Sins must be confronted, confessed, and rejected. If we have turned God's gifts to us into idols, we need to put them back in their proper place and recognize that God alone can claim our worship.

Apply the Word

The choice of where we place our focus, our time, our talents, and our gifts is ours. God is waiting and hoping that you choose well whom you will serve this day. As you spend time in prayer today, commit yourself afresh to the worship of and service to God, with all of your heart, mind, soul, and strength.

Pray with Us

Moody Publishers has reached millions of readers over the years. Please pray for Paul Santhouse, vice president of Publications, as he and his teams continue to help readers through quality Christian literature to know and love Christ.

Finishing the Battle Well

In the past, most people died at home, and the graves of family and friends were usually located in the churchyard. Death was not something distant or abstract; there were regular visual reminders of one's own mortality. Today, with most deaths occurring away from the home and cemeteries often out of sight, we can go about our daily lives without a thought that we will all pass from this life to the next.

> Israel served the LORD throughout the lifetime of Joshua.
>
> Joshua 24:31

Joshua's eulogy is short but powerful. First, his title, "the servant of the LORD" acts as a reminder that Joshua had faithfully obeyed God's call to serve as the leader of His people (v. 29). Second, the text notes that he was buried in "the land of his inheritance" (v. 30). Joshua's obedience was rewarded in part by having received the promise of the land where he could be buried. Unlike the generations before him, he was not laid to rest in the wilderness, in an unmarked spot where his loved ones could never return.

Finally, and most significantly, "Israel served the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua" (v. 31). Scripture then provides us with an example of the obedience of the people: the bones of Joseph, which they had been carrying around the wilderness for over forty years, were finally laid to rest in his father's land. Joseph had believed that God would make good on His promise to restore the people to the land, and now his descendants were experiencing part of that inheritance.

The book of Joshua ends by noting the burials of three of Israel's great leaders—Joshua, Joseph, and Eleazar. But this is far from a depressing conclusion; on the contrary, these burials serve as reminders that God has delivered His people and given them the land He promised.

Apply the Word

Some have suggested that a good exercise to enable you to focus on your priorities in life is to write your own obituary today. No matter how old you are, how would you describe the life you have led? Is your love for God evident in the things you value and the ways you've spent your time? Can others see evidence of God's faithful provision in your life?

Pray with Us

Concluding our prayer time, let's thank the Lord for the lessons from the book of Joshua this month. Let us pray for strength and courage to follow God steadfastly in all circumstances and to remember that He fights our battles.

Continued from page 4

way in recent months during his transition to retirement, Mike said that he is humbled. "All of the random things you experience and happen to you over the years suddenly dovetail and come together," he said. "People have heroes, but I have never thought of myself as one. I rather think of myself as the apostle Paul did—never achieving, always striving."

Mike was alluding to Philippians 3:12: "Not that I have already obtained all this, or have arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold for me."

You might also know Mike as one of our "Q & A" columnists. Mike combines his credentials as an ordained minister with a kindness that reflects our loving Father when he answers questions from readers. He draws on his biblical training, life experience, and tremendous interactions with people to give answers that are both applicable and encouraging.

Answering someone's question is an inherently personal interaction, even when all of us readers are able to appreciate the wise and thoughtful response. This is something you will hear again and again when you ask someone to describe hearing Mike on the radio.

I had the privilege of serving with Mike on *Music Thru the Night* for several years before I joined *Today in the Word*. Most messages heard on radio tend to have the feeling of being broadcast to a mass audience. But countless letters, emails, and phone conversations with Mike's listeners repeated that when they heard Mike speak, they felt like he was speaking to them personally. It was like a one-on-one conversation.

Joyce, a *Today in the Word* reader from Indiana, has felt this personal connection with Mike. Hearing a new voice (Jon Gauger) this year on the *Today in the Word* podcast, Joyce took the time to send in her gratitude for Mike's service:

"He has been one of the most important voices from Moody for me over many past years. His voice was always warm and welcoming and I always felt I was hearing important words from a close friend."

I asked Mike if he had a message he wanted to communicate to you, the *Today in the Word* reader. He pointed me to John 1:14 and Hebrews 13:20–21.

"We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." —John 1:14

"Now may the God of peace . . . equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." —Hebrews 13:20–21

"That has to be the focus—the glory of God. That's what it's all about!" he said. Thank you, Mike, for your faithful service, for your kindness and wisdom, and for all the important words listeners and readers heard from you—a close friend!

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