

Studies in the Book of Joshua
Lesson 12 - Joshua 22:1-34
The Abundant Life
Tribes Return Home

On September 30, 1938, British Prime Minister Sir Neville Chamberlain, just back from Germany, told a gathering at 10 Downing Street: “My good friends, this is the second time in our history that there has come back from Germany to Downing Street peace with honor. I believe it is peace for our time. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts. And now I recommend you to go home and sleep quietly in your beds.” Less than a year later, England was at war with Germany; and World War II had burst upon the world.

On May 8, 1945, President Truman announce over the radio: “General Eisenhower informs me that the forces of Germany have surrendered to the United Nations. The flags of freedom fly all over Europe.”

Church history is packed with agreements and accords that magnified unity over purity and truth, and therefore never lasted. Whether in our personal relationships in our homes and churches, or in our nation, the only peace that lasts is peace that is based on truth and purity. It’s a peace that demands sacrifice and courage, and a willingness to stand up for God’s Word; but the results are worth it.

The land has been taken and divided among the tribes. The promised rest is fulfilled for now. The eastern tribes have shared in the work of conquest and have received their share of the inheritance (Land, Booty, Cities of refuge, Levites to teach God’s Word). They are full members of the covenant nation, despite the physical barrier between their land and the Jordan river. Now it’s time to settle down to work at peace with the same zeal with which they worked at war.

The soldiers from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh must have been especially excited when the Jewish conquest of Canaan ended. For over seven years they had been away from their families on the other side of the Jordan, and now the victorious soldiers were free to go home. But their return home was not without incident. In fact, what they did, well-meaning as it was, almost provoked another war. Let’s consider the events involved and the lessons we can learn from them.

Read Joshua 22:1-9. Pray and answer the following questions:

1. What did Joshua want the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh to do since the Lord had given their brothers rest?
2. What did Joshua remind them of as they were returning to go back over the river to live with their families? Name 5 things they were to be careful in. (See Joshua 22:5)
3. What did Joshua do before sending them away to their tents?

Read Joshua 22:10-34. Pray and answer the following questions:

4. Why do you think the author makes such a point of telling about the eastern tribes (Reubenites, Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh) role in the story?
5. What did the people of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh build for themselves? What was their reason for building this?
6. Phinehas saw the people of Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh answer as evidence “that the Lord is with us”. What was the evidence of this? (See 22:31)

7. What are some lessons in communication we can learn from this section?

8. What is the difference between no communication, communication, and good communication?

9. Based on what we learn here, how can you improve your communication with others, especially your spouse and family?

10. What truths did you learn from studying chapter 22 that personally apply to you?

11. What can you do this week to personally apply this truth?

Here's Some Great Scriptures on the Subject of Communication

The mouth of the righteous speaks wisdom, And his tongue talks of justice. Psalm 37:30

A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger. Proverbs 15:1

There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, But the tongue of the wise promotes health. Proverbs 12:18

Anxiety in the heart of man causes depression, But a good word makes it glad.
Proverbs 12:25

A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver. Proverbs 25:11

For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned. Matthew 12:27

Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. Ephesians 4:29

Set a guard, O LORD, over my mouth; Keep watch over the door of my lips.
Psalm 141:3

Commentary provided by Warren Wiersbe and others