

**Studies in the book of
Joshua
The Abundant Life
Introduction**

Why should anybody today study the Book of Joshua, an ancient book that gives a grim account of war, slaughter, and conquest? If the Book of Joshua were fiction, we might accept it as an exciting adventure story; but the book conveys real history and is a part of inspired Holy Scripture. What does it mean to us today?

“There never was a good war, or a bad peace,” Benjamin Franklin wrote in 1783; but it’s possible that the wise old patriot was wrong for once. After all, God called Joshua to be a general and to lead the army of Israel in holy conquest. But there were bigger issues involved in that conquest than the invasion and possession of a land, issues that touch our lives and our faith today.

That’s why we’re embarking on this study. The Book of Joshua is the book of new beginnings for the people of God, and many believers today need a new beginning. After forty years of wandering in the wilderness, Israel claimed their inheritance and enjoyed the blessings of the land that God had prepared for them. That’s the kind of life God wants us to experience today. Jesus Christ, our Joshua, wants to lead us in conquest now and share with us all the treasures of His wonderful inheritance. He has “blessed us with all spiritual blessings” (Eph. 1:3), but too often we live like defeated paupers.

Whether we like it or not, God’s people are expected to be soldiers. At least Paul thought so: “*You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.*” (2 Tim. 2:3-4).

The Book of Joshua tells us how to be victorious soldiers and how to claim our rich spiritual inheritance in Jesus Christ. It tells us how to be strong and courageous as we face our enemies and march forward to claim new territory for the Lord.

Theme

It has been pointed out before that Canaan is a type of the Christian's inheritance in Christ. Canaan is not a picture of heaven, because the believer does not have to battle to gain his heavenly home. Canaan represents God's inheritance, given to the believer and claimed by faith. The victorious Christian life is a life of battles and blessings, but it is also a life of rest. In Heb. 4-5 we see that the entering of the nation into Canaan is a picture of the believer entering into a life of rest and victory through faith in Christ. Too many Christians are "in between" in their spiritual lives, between Egypt and Canaan. They have been delivered from the bondage of sin, but they have not by faith entered into the inheritance of rest and victory. How to enter and claim this inheritance is the theme of Joshua.

Personality Profile: Joshua

Name means: "The Lord is salvation," practically the same name as Jesus.
Also known as: Hoshea

Home: Timnath Serah, about 17 miles southwest of Shechem, in the mountains of Ephraim

Family: The son of Nun, of the tribe of Ephraim

Occupation: Military commander, Assistant to Moses

Best known today as: The successor to Moses

Joshua the Man

Joshua was born in Egyptian slavery. His father was Nun, of the tribe of Ephraim; we know nothing about his mother. Originally his name was Oshea or Hoshea, which means "*salvation*," but Moses changed it to Jehoshua (or Joshua), which means "*Jehovah is salvation*." He was a slave in Egypt and served as Moses assistant during the journeys of the nation. He also led the army in the battle against Amalek, and was one of the two spies

who had the faith to enter Canaan when the nation rebelled in unbelief. As a result of his faith, he (along with Caleb) was permitted to enter the Promised Land. Jewish tradition says that Joshua was eighty-five years old when he took Moses place at the head of the nation. Joshua 1-12 (the conquest of the land) covers roughly the next seven years; he spent the remainder of his life dividing up the inheritance and ruling the nation. He died at 110. The New Testament makes it clear that Joshua is a type of Christ. The name “Jesus” in Greek is equivalent to “Joshua”; both mean “God’s salvation” or “Jehovah is the Savior.” Just as Joshua conquered earthly foes, so Christ has defeated every enemy through His death and resurrection. It was Joshua, not Moses (representing Law), who brought Israel into Canaan, and it is Jesus who leads us into spiritual rest and victory. As Joshua assigned the tribes their inheritance so Christ has given us our inheritance.

The Defeated Nations

Those who oppose the inspiration of the Bible enjoy attacking the passages in Joshua that tell about war and slaughter. “How can a God of love command such bloodshed?” they ask. Keep in mind that God had given these nations hundreds of years to repent, yet they refused to turn from their filthy ways. If you wish to know what “the doings of Canaan” were, read Lev. 18, and keep in mind that these immoral practices were a part of heathen religious worship! Any sinner in the nation could be saved by faith, and there was adequate warning sent ahead. God sometimes uses war to afflict and even to destroy nations that forget Him. God had these wicked nations destroyed to punish them for their sins and, something like a doctor who disinfects his instruments to kill the germs, to protect His people from their evil ways.

The Book of Joshua tells about the Israelites taking possession of Canaan, known as the Promised Land. God told the Israelites to drive out or destroy the tribes already living in the land, known as the Canaanites. The Canaanites had a fairly advanced culture, organized into city and states. They were among the most active merchants and traders in the ancient Middle East. But they stood under the judgment of God because of their idolatrous religious practices, which the Lord condemned as abominations. The Israelite invasion was God’s means of judging these pagan tribes.

The leader of Israel during this period of conquest was Joshua. He was born in Egypt but left with the rest of his people at the time of the exodus.

Apparently it did not take Moses long to recognize Joshua's leadership potential, because shortly after leaving Egypt he selected Joshua to act as Israel's general in a battle against the Amalekites. Later, Joshua became Moses personal assistant, and ultimately his successor.

The campaign to capture Canaan was a personal victory for Joshua. At Kadesh Barnea, he and Caleb had stood against ten other spies who had been sent to spy out the land. The ten had reported that Canaan was impossible to capture. But Joshua and Caleb insisted that with the Lord's help, the people could possess it. Soon after, God said that because of their faith, Joshua and Caleb would be the only adults to enter the promised land

Key Figures in the Book of Joshua

Joshua (1:1) Moses successor was a superb general whose wise leadership and courageous faith enabled the Israelites to start taking possession of Canaan, which God had promised to give them.

Rahab (2:1) This Canaanite prostitute exercised faith in Israel's God by aiding Israelite spies who came to her well-defended city of Jericho.

Achan (7:19) One man's greed led to willful disobedience that cost the lives of 36 warriors.

Caleb (14:6) Even at 85 years of age, stouthearted Caleb was eager to take on a tribe of giants who lived at Hebron.

Phinehas (22:13) Faithful to the last, Aaron's grandson Phinehas was called upon to resolve a dispute between the tribes.

Studies in the book of Joshua
Lesson 1 - Joshua 1:1-18
The Abundant Life
Marching Orders

“God buries His workman, but His work goes on.” Israel has finished mourning for Moses, and now God speaks to Joshua concerning his responsibilities as the new leader of the nation. God had chosen Joshua to be Moses successor as far back as the battle with Amalek. It must have encouraged Joshua greatly to know that he was called of God, for he had a tremendous task ahead of him.

Notice that God gives every encouragement to Joshua: (1) the promise of the land, vs. 2-4, (2) the promise of His presence, vs. 5, and (3) the assurance that God would keep His word, vs. 6-9. He had already given them the land; all they had to do was step out by faith and claim it! All we need do is step out by faith and possess our possessions.

As God was with Moses, so He would be with Joshua: “*I will not leave you nor forsake you*” (vs. 5). Leaders change, and times change, but God does not change. Notice that courage is demanded in the Christian life, but this courage is supplied by the Word of God. Moses had been writing “the Book of the Law,” and this Book was now given to Joshua. He was to read the Book, meditate upon it night and day, and obey its commands. If Joshua was able to conquer Canaan having only the first five books of the Bible, how much more should we be encouraged to overcome now that we have a complete Bible!

Here we have a “spiritual chain of command.” God commanded Joshua (vs. 9), Joshua commanded the leaders (vs. 10), and the leaders were to command the people (vs. 11). This is spiritual leadership under the command of God, and this same pattern we should follow in the church today. Joshua told the leaders what God had told him, and they quickly passed the message along to their people. Three days later, they would cross the Jordan and enter the Promised Land, and they had to prepare for the event.

Note their prayer in vs. 17 and their encouragement in vs. 18. Joshua had seen their division and heard their murmuring years ago. How grateful he must have been for the unity of the Spirit now seen among the people.

Read Joshua 1:1-18 and answer the following questions

1. What prepared Joshua to lead the nation of Israel into the Promised Land?
2. For what major change did the Lord want Joshua to get the Israelites prepared?
3. What promise did the Lord give to Joshua? (1:5)
4. What specific steps did the Lord instruct Joshua to take in order to be successful? (1:7)
5. What did God say meditation on the Book of the Law would accomplish?
6. How long were the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh instructed to help the other tribes of Israel? (1:15)
7. How did the Israelite leaders respond to Joshua's instruction?

Stand Strong and Hang On

Was Joshua hard of hearing? The Lord reminded him three times to be “strong and courageous.” There must have been an important message in those words.

The Hebrew word for “strong” refers to “strong legs” while the one for “courage” refers to “having a secure grasp.” The point is clear. God was telling Joshua that his success as a leader depended on whether he could stand strong and hold on tightly!

Joshua had already experienced situations in which he was forced to take a strong stance in the face of opposition. For instance, when the Israelites were poised to enter Canaan 40 years earlier, Joshua had been one of only two men who insisted that the nation should move forward under God’s power.

What was Joshua to keep a “secure grasp” on? God’s plans, purposes, and values as found in “the Book of the Law.”

Joshua’s example urges believers to consider: What do we stand for and what do we stand on? What are we holding on to with a secure grip?

Studies in the Book of Joshua
Lesson 2 – Joshua 2:1-24
The Abundant Life
Spies Go into Jericho

Archaeologists have done a great deal of research at Jericho. They tell us the city covered about eight acres, with inner and outer walls surrounding the city. The inner wall was twelve feet thick, the outer wall six feet thick, and there were houses upon the walls. The walls stood about thirty feet high, and excavations show that these walls were “violently destroyed.”

Only two women are personally named in Hebrews 11, “The Hall of Faith”: Sarah, the wife of Abraham, and Rahab, the harlot of Jericho. Sarah was a godly woman, the wife of the founder of the Hebrew race, and God used her dedicated body to bring Isaac into the world. But Rahab was an ungodly Gentile who worshiped pagan gods and sold her body for money. Humanly speaking, Sarah and Rahab had nothing in common. But from the divine viewpoint, Sarah and Rahab shared the most important thing in life; they both had exercised saving faith in the true and living God.

Not only does the Bible associate Rahab with Sarah, but in James 2:21–26, it also associates her with Abraham. James used both Abraham and Rahab to illustrate the fact that true saving faith always proves itself by good works. But there’s more: The Bible associates Rahab with the Messiah! When you read the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 1, you find Rahab’s name listed there, along with Jacob, David, and the other famous people in the messianic line. She has certainly come a long way from being a pagan prostitute to being an ancestress of the Messiah! “*But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.*”

Keep in mind that the most important thing about Rahab was her faith. That’s the most important thing about any person, for “*without faith it is impossible to please God.*” Not everything that is called “faith” is really true faith, the kind of faith that is described in the Bible.

Finally, the people of Israel, weren’t quite ready yet to cross the river and conquer the enemy. They had some “unfinished business” to take care of before they could be sure of the blessing of the Lord.

Read Joshua Chapter 2:1-24 and answer the following questions

1. Why did Joshua send spies to Canaan? How do you imagine the spies felt about sneaking into Canaan?

2. What does this passage reveal about Rahab? (2:1)

3. How did the king of Jericho respond to the message that there were spies in his city?

4. How did Rahab respond to the king's message? (2:4-5)

5. How did Rahab protect the spies from the king's messengers?

6. What reassurance did Rahab give to the spies? How did Rahab know that the Lord had given the land over to the Israelites?

7. What instilled fear in the hearts of the Canaanites? (2:10-11)

8. What were the conditions of the deal between Rahab and the spies?
(2:17-20)

9. What was the nature of the spies report to Joshua? (2:24)

10. What is one Christian value that you feel you need to take a stand on to be a more effective witness for Christ?

11. What does this passage teach us about the kind of people God uses to accomplish His purposes?

12. What does the conclusion of this passage teach us about God's faithfulness to believers who take risks because of their faith?

God's Cord of Mercy

The Bible tells us that we are all under a sentence, just as much as the people of Jericho. We are by nature sinners and are under the sentence of eternal destruction (Eph. 2:1–3). Just as the army of Israel gathered together and marched against Jericho, so God's destruction is marching towards each of us.

But God in mercy has given us a cord to put in the window of our lives. That cord is Jesus. Before the sentence of wrath can be lifted from us, the reason for that wrath has to be removed. What is the reason for God's wrath? Our sin! The only way for sin to be removed is for its penalty to be paid. Jesus came to this earth for the express purpose of removing sin from between us and God, which is another way of saying that Jesus came to this earth to receive the penalty for sin so that all those who believe in him do not have to receive that penalty themselves.

On the cross, Jesus received that penalty in full. The only question that remains is whether we believe what Jesus did. We have in Jesus the cord that can and will spare us from the wrath of God. Have we put the cord out? Have we believed the word of God, as Rahab did, and acted accordingly? Have we believed what the Bible says about our sins, about God's wrath and about salvation through Christ?

True faith in Christ changes our lives. If we truly believe in Jesus, we cannot go on living as we did before. Rahab believed and was spared, and that changed her life. She did not go on with harlotry, but rather took her place among the people of God in Israel and, yes, even as one of the ancestors of the Messiah. The apostle Paul says, *'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.'* (2 Cor. 5:17)

Studies in the Book of Joshua
Lesson 3 - Joshua 3:1-4:24
The Abundant Life
Crossing of the Jordan

Like our New Testament Joshua, Joshua arose early in the morning to meditate on the Word and to prepare himself for the day's duties. It was not left for Joshua to invent a method of crossing the flooded Jordan, for God gave him all the instructions necessary. The key word in this chapter is ark, used ten times. Of course, the ark symbolized the presence of God. The ark went before the people to lead them, and it was kept in the midst of the river until the entire nation had passed over. Christ always goes before His people and opens the way, but the people must sanctify themselves and be ready for God's leading. God was going to lead the Jews in a new way, and they had to be ready.

At the Exodus, God had proved Himself Lord and the true God beside whom the gods of Egypt were but harmless idols. Now God would prove Himself the "Lord of all the earth." All the gods of the heathen nations would fall before Him! God would prove His power by holding back the waters of the flooded Jordan and permitting His people to cross over on dry land.

It is instructive to contrast the crossing of the Red Sea and the crossing of the Jordan. The first crossing illustrates separation from the past (Egypt, the world), while the second crossing pictures entrance by faith into our spiritual inheritance in Christ. The enemy was defeated once and for all when the Egyptian army was drowned in the Red Sea, but the Jews had to win one victory after another when they crossed Jordan and entered Canaan. On the cross, Jesus defeated our enemies, but we have to walk and war by faith if we are to have daily victory. We "cross the Jordan" when we enter by faith into the victory experience of Romans 6-8.

The Jews could not get victory in Canaan and overcome the enemy without first going through Jordan. Nor can Christians today overcome their spiritual foes unless they die to self, reckon themselves crucified with Christ, and allow the Spirit to give them resurrection power.

Read Joshua 3:1-17 and answer the following questions

1. What is the setting of this story? (3:1)

2. What specific instructions did the officers give to the people regarding their journey?

3. Why was it necessary for the Israelite people to consecrate themselves? (3:5)

4. For what reason did God choose to praise Joshua in the eyes of the Israelites? (3:7)

5. How were the Israelites to know that God was with them and would drive out their enemies from the land of Canaan? (3:10-13)

6. What happened when the priests who were carrying the ark reached the Jordan River?

Read Joshua 4:1-24 and answer the following questions

7. Why did the Lord tell Joshua to choose twelve men from among the Israelites? (4:2-3)

8. Why were stones taken from the Jordan riverbed?

9. How did the people of Israel respond to the miracle God performed on their behalf? (4:14)

10. What specific tradition did Joshua instruct the Israelites to initiate?

11. According to Joshua, for what two reasons did God perform this miracle? (4:24)

12. Why do you think God instructed Joshua to set up a physical reminder of the miracle He performed?

Great Life Lesson on “Crossing the Jordan”

God wanted Israel to learn important lessons from the miracle of crossing the Jordan river. God demonstrated that He was with Joshua as He had been with Moses. The ark of the covenant was God’s throne on earth. Literally, the Lord went into the dangerous river first, demonstrating His role as Israel’s protector. The same God that went with Joshua and the Israelites into the Jordan is here with us today.

“When you go through deep waters, I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty, you will not drown. When you walk through the fire of oppression, you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you.”
Isaiah 43:2 NLV

Second, the Lord revealed that His wonder-working strength would enable the people to conquer every enemy they faced. Most of the year, the Jordan river was about one hundred feet wide and only three to ten feet deep. However, when the Israelites crossed, it was at flood stage, overflowing its banks. Nothing but the mighty hand of God could have parted it and made it safe for people to cross. No enemy can overcome God's mighty power.

Almost all the people of Israel who had witnessed the crossing of the Red Sea in their escape from Egypt had died. Parting the Red Sea reinforced God's love for this new generation.

Crossing the Promised Land also represented a break with Israel's past. When the Manna stopped, it forced the people to conquer their enemies and subdue the land God intended for them. Through baptism in the New Testament, the Jordan River is associated with crossing over into a new life of spiritual freedom.

Studies in the Book of Joshua
Lesson 4 - Joshua 5:1-12
The Abundant Life
Final Preparations

The Jews were no sooner safe on the other side than God commanded them to receive the mark of the covenant, circumcision. Collectively as a nation they had gone through the experience of “death” in crossing the river. Now they were to apply that “death to self” individually.

Throughout the Bible, physical circumcision is always a picture of a spiritual truth. Unfortunately, the Jews made the physical rite more important than the spiritual truth it taught. Circumcision pictures putting off that which is sinful, and in the New Testament it illustrates putting off the “*old man*” of the flesh. It is not enough for me to say, “I died with Christ”; I must make this truth practical in my daily life by “*putting to death*” the deeds of the flesh. The Old Testament Jew put off but a small portion of his flesh. Through Christ, however, the New Testament Christian has put off “the body of the sins of the flesh.” This operation at Gilgal, then, is an illustration of the truth that each believer must live “*crucified with Christ.*”

The Jewish males had not received this mark of the covenant during their years of wandering in the wilderness, and for a very good reason: their unbelief had temporarily suspended their covenant relationship with God. When they refused to enter Canaan because of their unbelief, God “*gave them up*” to years of wandering until the old generation died. Now the new generation was to receive the mark of the covenant. Their unbelief did not glorify God.

The new generation crossed the Jordan, but they did not immediately attack Jericho. Many of today’s Christians would have rushed right into battle! But God knew that His people needed to be prepared spiritually for the battle that lay ahead, so He caused them to wait and to rest. While waiting, they celebrated the Passover. It had been forty years before when the nation was delivered from Egypt on that first Passover night. The main lesson is clear: there can be no conquest without death to self (crossing the Jordan) and identification with Christ’s resurrection (the two memorials of stone). Before the Jews could get victory over the enemy, they had to experience victory over sin and self.

1. What did the Amorite and Canaanite kings hear about the God of Israel?
(5:1)

2. What was the last thing the Israelites had to do before they could enter the Promised Land?

3. For what reasons was it necessary to circumcise the Israelites again?
(5:4-7)

4. What does this passage reveal about the expectations the Israelites had about the Promised Land? (5:6)

5. How did the Lord respond to the Israelites' obedience to His command to be circumcised? What issue was reconciled through the circumcision of the Israelites?

6. How was the Israelites' celebration significant in light of what they had just done? (5:10)

7. For what reason had the manna stopped appearing for the Israelites?

8. What do the actions of Joshua in this passage teach us about submission and obedience?

9. What does this passage show us about the reliability of God's promises?

10. How do you think the Israelites felt about their relationship with the Lord while they were wandering in the desert?

11. Circumcision, the Passover, and eating from the land were the Israelites final preparation before confronting the Canaanites. Summarize what these events should have taught and accomplished for the people.

12. What does 5:1-12 teach you about God's nature and character? How is Christ for us like both manna and the fruit of the promised land?

The Power is in the Word

Jon Courson

Then the manna ceased on the day after they had eaten the produce of the land; and the children of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate the food of the land of Canaan that year. Joshua 5:12

It is interesting to me that it was in the Promised Land, a picture of the Spirit-filled life, that the miracle of manna ceased. If there was ever going to be manna from heaven, I would think it would be when we're Spirit-filled, when we're moving in the arena of the miraculous, when we have the anointing of the Holy Ghost. But this passage tells me differently, for when the Israelites were in the wilderness, which speaks of carnality and dryness, miracles abounded. But now that they're in the Promised Land, the manna stops.

In the Azusa Street Revival of the early 1900s, during which there was a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the leader of the movement prophesied that three things would cause the movement of the Spirit to be quenched: more attention given to the Holy Spirit than to Jesus Christ, more attention given to praise than to prayer, and more attention given to the gifts of the Spirit than the fruit of the Spirit.

When they were released from Egypt and as they wandered in the wilderness, the children of Israel saw more signs and wonders than any other group of people in history. Yet it was unbelief that kept them from entering the Promised Land (Hebrews 3:19) because faith doesn't come through seeing miracles. It comes from hearing the Word. Therefore, the new generation would eat the formidable fruit produced in the land of God's promise rather than the manna of the miraculous.

Studies in the Book of Joshua
Lesson 5 - Joshua 5:13-6:27
The Abundant Life
Jericho

Jericho was a walled city. Joshua stood by the city and saw a man there with a drawn sword. Fearlessly, Joshua asked the man to declare himself, and he discovered that the Man was the Lord of Hosts! This is the “battle” title of the Lord; it speaks of His supreme command of the armies of Israel and of heaven. Jesus Christ had come down to direct the battle, and Joshua was quick to acknowledge His leadership. There can be no victory for the Lord in public unless we experience worship of the Lord in private. Joshua fell on his face in worship; he took off his shoes in humility; and he turned all his plans over to his Commander when he said, “*What does my Lord say to His servant?*” “I have given Jericho to you!” Christ promised. But the people had to step out by faith and claim the victory.

The armed men were to lead the procession, with seven priests following with trumpets. The ark was to follow, and then the rest of the people finished the procession. The procession was to march around Jericho once a day for six days in absolute silence except for the trumpets blowing. On the seventh day, they were to march around seven times (making a total of thirteen marches), and on the seventh march they were to blow the trumpets and shout. What a strange plan for fighting a war! But God’s ways are not our ways, and He uses what the world calls “foolish” to confound the mighty.

Joshua was fearless when it came to facing enemies on the battlefield. So when he came upon a stranger outside the city of Jericho, he challenged him; was he friend or foe? Was he going to fight for the Israelites or against them? Neither, the Man replied. He had not come to fight, but to take over; He was the Commander of the army of the Lord.

So it is today. God does not intend to be merely a foot soldier in our personal campaign, whatever it may be. He does not make His resources available to us so that we can accomplish our own agenda. He comes as the Lord, the Sovereign One, and the supreme Commander. We serve Him. We fight in His army. We worship at His feet, for in His presence we stand on holy ground.

Are you prepared to let Jesus give the orders in your life? Will you allow Him to determine the ultimate objectives? To give Him allegiance does not mean giving up all control or personal responsibility, but it does demand a conscious choice to deal with Him in terms of who He is—the Lord God, your Creator, Savior, and Commander.

8. What did Joshua say would happen to the man who tried to rebuild Jericho?
(6:26)

9. Why do you think God chose the method He did for the Israelites to win the battle against the people of Jericho?

10. What does this story teach us about the attitude God wants us to have whenever we succeed?

11. How do you imagine Joshua felt explaining to the Israelites the battle plans for their war against Jericho?

12. How do you feel when God tells you to do something that you don't think your friends will understand or approve of?

13. What does this story teach us about the type of person God uses to accomplish His plans?

Some Practical Points to Consider as We Face our Own “Jericho’s”

A. The soldier who wants to fight the best must bow the lowest before the battle: We win our battles on our knees and on our faces before the Lord.

B. No one can take a city alone: Joshua had the loyal cooperation of the priests and people, and together they overcame the enemy.

C. When we follow God’s methods, He wins the battle and He gets the glory: This is why He uses such “foolish methods.” When we use our own schemes and systems, we might get the glory but the victory never lasts.

D. Unbelief looks at the walls and giants (Num. 13:28), but faith looks to the Lord: “Obstacles are those nasty little things we see when we take our eyes off the goal.” And, we might add, when we take our eyes off the Lord. God’s commandments are God’s enablement’s.

E. We see the grace of God at work even in judgment, for Rahab and her family were saved by faith.

Studies in the Book of Joshua
Lesson 6 – Joshua 7:1-26
The Abundant Life
Trouble Valley

God had made it clear that the spoils of Jericho were to be “devoted” or dedicated to Him and placed in His treasury, but Achan had disobeyed this law. It is possible that Joshua was too hasty in his attack on Ai, that he did not wait for the Lord’s direction. Furthermore, he acted upon the suggestions of the spies rather than on God’s Word. Later, God rejected the plan given by the spies. There is a hint of overconfidence in these verses: Jericho had fallen to Israel, and they were confident that the smaller city of Ai would be a “pushover.” Self-confidence, dependence on human wisdom, impatience, lack of prayer, and a secret sin were behind Israel’s defeat at Ai.

Joshua and his leaders spent the whole day in prayer before the ark, and even Joshua wanted to “back up” and settle for an inheritance on the other side of the Jordan! Note, however, that Joshua was more concerned about the glory of the Lord and the testimony of Israel before the heathen nations, than he was about the discouragement of the defeat. It is a mark of true spirituality when God’s glory is what motivates a servant’s life.

God spoke sternly to His servant: “*Get up! Israel has sinned!*” Of course, only one man had sinned, but this involved the entire nation. It is a solemn truth that one person’s disobedience can cause the sorrow and failure of a whole nation, family, or church. Achan thought he could hide his sin, but God saw what he did. And because an “accursed thing” was in the camp, God could not dwell with His people. “Be sure your sin will find you out!” Achan was discovered and his sin exposed. “*I have sinned!*” confessed Achan. Undoubtedly the members of his household knew about the loot and were sharing in his sin. All of them had to be judged for their disobedience, so the people took them to the valley and stoned them. That place was called the “Valley of Achor.” Israel has been in the “valley of trouble” because of her rejection of Christ, but one day the nation will turn to Him and find hope.

Read Joshua 7, pray and answer the following questions:

1. How did the Israelites act unfaithfully? (7:1)

2. How did the Lord respond to the Israelites' unfaithfulness? (7:1)

3. For what reason did Joshua send men from Jericho to Ai? (7:2)

4. What report did the spies give to Joshua regarding their mission?

5. Why were the spies confident of their ability to overcome the city of Ai? (7:3)

6. What was the outcome of the Israelites' battle with the men of Ai? Why had the Lord allowed Israel to lose the battle with Ai?

7. According to Joshua, for what reason was Achan asked to confess his sin? (7:19)

8. How did the Israelites repent of their sin before the Lord?

9. What was the Lord's response to the Israelites repentance? (7:26)

10. What does this story tell us about the power of greed?

11. How does God's response to Israel's repentance encourage you?

Confession That Brings Healing

Great word from the "Word in Life Study Bible"

Achan's confession of sin was clear and straightforward. Rather than try to hide what he had done, he openly declared not only that he had sinned, but the specific nature of the sin as well. He and his family received the required punishment for his wrongdoing, but his confession brought cleaning to the nation. Sin always has consequences. Nevertheless, Scripture urges us to confess our sin, because great benefits can result.

What does it mean to tell God, "I'm sorry" and admit that we have sinned? In 1 Sam. 15:17-31 Samuel's confrontation of Saul about sins that Saul had committed and responsibilities that he had betrayed makes an interesting study in confession.

Saul acknowledged his error and described its source: fear of his people rather than of God's commands. Samuel informed Saul that he would lose his kingship because of what he had done. Here we see an example of sin's long-lasting consequence regardless of confession and forgiveness. Below is

a list of some other people in the Bible who confessed sins to the Lord. Each one offers a lesson about the impact of sin, as well as the healing and hope that come from acknowledging wrongdoing to a God who loves to forgive.

JOB: Learned from his suffering that he tended toward self-sufficiency, for which he repented. God was pleased and blessed him with abundance in the restoration of his property and family.

MOSES: Interceded for his people after the incident with the golden calf. Although Moses himself was blameless, he appealed to the Lord to forgive the people's sins. God heeded his prayer, but promised to punish the people's rebellion.

ACHAN: Confessed of taking forbidden spoils of war when confronted by Joshua. Achan was stoned to death, but the Lord turned from His fierce anger toward Israel.

DAVID: Admitted to adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, Uriah, when confronted by Nathan. The child of David and Bathsheba's union died shortly after its birth, even though David pleaded with God to heal it. Later God gave the couple a son, Solomon.

EZRA: Reacted strongly to the sin of intermarriage with Gentiles committed by many of the Israelites, by tearing his garments, pulling out his hair, and grieving over their sins for an entire day. Later he confronted the people, challenging them to repent and correct their wrongs, which they did.

NEHEMIAH: Recognized that the Babylonian exile was the result of his nation's repeated rebelliousness. In response, he prayed, fasted, mourned and repented. God gave him the opportunity to return to Jerusalem and begin rebuilding the city wall so that his people could live in freedom and security.

All commentary provided by Warren Wiersbe and others

Studies in the Book of Joshua
Lesson 7 - Joshua 8:1-35
The Abundant Life
Promise Restored

Israel now has one blazing victory and one embarrassing defeat to its credit. Ai controls the high point of the road from Jericho into the arteries of Canaan, so the city must be taken. Although Achan is dead, Joshua, won't sleep easily until he knows Israel is in the Lord's good grace again.

Now that the nation had been sanctified and their sin judged, God could again lead His people to victory. Note how the Lord used the defeat to good advantage, for the people of Ai were confident that they could overcome Israel again. Note too that God allowed the people to take the loot from Ai. Had Achan waited a few days, he would have had all the wealth he could have carried.

The plan was a simple one. Joshua sent 30,000 men to Bethel at night, and placed another five thousand between Bethel and Ai. Some of the soldiers attacked Ai and drew the men out of the city. At that point Joshua signaled the ambush, and his men entered the city and captured it. It was a complete victory! Joshua holding up his spear in vs. 26 reminds us of Moses holding up his hands when Joshua fought Amalek. Ai was made such a desolation that archaeologists cannot be certain of its location even today.

Joshua interrupted his military campaign to take the nation thirty miles to Shechem where he obeyed the commandments of Deut. 27:4-6. We are told that this valley is a natural amphitheater with wonderful acoustics. Joshua put the tribes of Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali on Mt. Ebal (the mount of the curses); and he put Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin on Mt. Gerizim (the mount of blessing). Joshua well knew that Israel's victory and possession of the land depended on their obedience to the Word of God. It was more important for the nation to hear the Word than to fight any more battles. Note that he also built an altar, for apart from the blood of Christ, we have no righteousness before God. The Law would have condemned and slain them had they neglected the sacrifices. We must admire and imitate Joshua's respect for the Word of God.

Read Joshua 8:1-29, pray and answer the following questions:

1. This time, who gives the orders regarding the attack on Ai? Why is this important? (8:1-2)

2. What do the Lord's words in 8:1-2 signify, in light of chapter 7?

3. What role does each of the following play in conquering Ai?
 - a. The Lord (See 8:1-2, 7-8, 18-19)

 - b. Joshua (See 8:3-13, 15, 18, 26, 28-29)

 - c. All Israel (8:3-13, 15, 19, 21-27)

4. The author of the book of Joshua gives detailed descriptions of only a few of the dozens of battles Israel fought.
 - a. In your opinion, why is the conquest of Ai important enough to recount in detail?

 - b. What does it contribute to the overall message of Joshua?

- c. What should later generations of Israelites have learned from this story?

Read Joshua 8:30-35, pray and answer the following questions:

5. In his farewell address to Israel, Moses instructed the nation to perform a ceremony at Mount Gerizim and Ebal. What did Moses tell Israel to do?
 - a. Compare Deuteronomy 27:1-4, 8 to Joshua 8:32
 - b. Compare Deuteronomy 27:5-7 to Joshua 8:30-31
 - c. Compare Deuteronomy 27:11-26 to Joshua 8:33
6. What did Joshua do besides what Moses had said? (8:34-35)
7. The defeat of Ai may have given Israel its first opportunity to proceed all the way to Shechem. Why do you think this was an appropriate time to renew Israel's commitment to the Lord and His covenant?

8. What important truths do you think Christians should learn from the accounts of the conquest of Ai and the covenant renewal at Ebal?

9. What might have been the purpose of reading God's law aloud before all the assembly of Israel? (8:34-35).

10. What's one truth from this chapter you would like to begin applying to your own life this week?

All Commentary provided by Warren Wiersbe and others

Studies in the Book of Joshua

Lesson 8 - Joshua 9:1-27

The Abundant Life

Gibeon's Deception

The heathen tribes of Canaan were divided into many little “nations” with key cities as their centers. They usually fought each other, but when God’s people arrived, these petty kings united to oppose Israel. It is amazing how enemies unite against God! However, the people at Gibeon, the next city to be taken, decided to use deceit instead of force. They dressed themselves to appear like men who had been on a long journey, with old sacks, patched shoes, and moldy food, and their plan worked. God had commanded Israel to make no covenant with the nations in Canaan, but the Gibeonites knew that if they did get a covenant, Israel would keep it. They lied when they said they came from a far country. Note also that they said nothing about Israel’s victories at Jericho and Ai.

Joshua and his leaders failed to seek God’s mind in the matter; instead, they judged by appearances. The Gibeonites story sounded reasonable; the food and clothing certainly seemed to be old and worn out; and everything appeared to be in order. Consequently, Joshua made a pact with the men and then discovered that they were from Gibeon! Three days later, Israel came to Gibeon and its allied cities, but they could not attack them because of their promise. This caused murmuring among the people, who probably wanted more spoils. But God’s people could not go back on their word. All Israel could do was make slaves out of the Gibeonites. They put them to work cutting wood and drawing water for the tabernacle service. At least they made their mistakes work for them!

What Jericho could not do with walls, or Ai with weapons, the Gibeonites accomplished with deceit. Satan tries one device after another to defeat God’s people, and we must constantly be on guard. Note that it is usually after a great victory that Satan begins his subtle attacks. It was after the victory at Jericho that Israel was defeated by Ai, and it was after Israel’s defeat of Ai that Joshua was deceived by Gibeon. We must beware of “judging after the flesh” and depending on our own wisdom. James 1:5 promises that God will give us wisdom if we ask for it. Christians must beware of worldly alliances. We shall see in chapter 10 that Joshua was forced to defend his enemies because of his hasty covenant. Moses warned Israel in Deut. 7 that friendship with these heathen nations would only lead Israel into sin, and that is exactly what happened.

Read Joshua 9. Pray and answer the following questions:

1. How did the leaders of Canaan react to the news of Jericho and Ai?

2. What did these people do, when they decided that individually they could not defeat Israel?

3. The Gibeonites figured out that Israel intended to destroy all the natives of Canaan. How did they hope to escape destruction?

4. Why were Joshua and the leaders wrong to make a peace treaty with Gibeon? (See Deut. 7:1-6, 20:10-18)

5. What would of happen if Israel had broken an oath sworn in the Lord's name? (9:19-20).

6. What did the leaders decide to do with the Gibeonites?

7. What does this tell you about God's nature and the way He regards the use of His name?

8. Israel gave the Gibeonites a small role in the community, but it kept them close to the Lord and His people. What do you learn about God from the way things eventually worked out for Gibeon?

9. Do non-Christians ever do to Christians what Gibeon did to Israel? Have you ever experienced this? If so, how can we guard against it?

10. Why do you think the story of Gibeon is included in detail in the book of Joshua? What message does it add to the book?

Peace
But at What Price?
Joshua 9

Leadership often involves negotiation, diplomacy, and keeping the peace. But peace alone is not a worthwhile goal, as the treaty with the Gibeonites suggests (9:15). God had instructed Israel to destroy the Canaanites. Note how Joshua failed in this assignment with the people of Gibeon:

1. The decision was made on the basis of appearances rather than careful study, reflection, and investigation. (9:12-14). The text suggests that Joshua and the elders of Israel came to a hasty decision. They failed to check the facts of the Gibeonites story, and were apparently satisfied with circumstantial evidence.
2. The decision was made without seeking counsel from the Lord. (9:14). This was Israel's worst mistake. Normally, Joshua was known as a leader that moved only after worshiping God and seeking His direction. On this occasion he acted on his own, with the result being a bad bargain.
3. The direction was poor but the deal was honored nevertheless (9:18-20). To the nations credit, it followed through on its commitment to spare the lives of the Gibeonites.

This incident with Gibeon is a useful case study for anyone in leadership. It challenges one to ask: On what basis am I making decisions? Am I seeking God's wisdom and timing? Do I follow through on the agreements I make, even if it costs me?

Commentary provide by Warren Wiersbe and others

Studies in the Book of Joshua
Lesson 9 - Joshua 10:1-12:24
The Abundant Life
God Fights for Israel

When you make agreements with the enemy, expect to end up paying a price and having to defend them in order to protect yourself. This is why God's people must remain separated from the world. As you review the whole story of Joshua and the Gibeonites, you can't help but be both warned and encouraged. These events warn us to be alert and prayerful lest the enemy deceive us and we start walking by sight instead of by faith. Then we'll find ourselves making decisions that are wrong and getting into alliances that are dangerous. But there's also a word of encouragement: God can take even our blunders and turn them into blessings. This isn't an excuse for carelessness, but it is a great encouragement when you've failed the Lord and His people.

This section continues on and summarizes Israel's conquest of the southern and northern cities. Two things stand out in this record: It was the Lord who gave the victory; and Joshua obeyed the Lord by utterly destroying the enemy, just as Moses had commanded. The only exception was Gibeon.

Joshua's strategy was to cut across the land and divide it, then conquer the southern cities, then the northern cities. On more than one occasion, he made a surprise attack on the enemy; and the promises of the Lord encouraged him.

The "long time" of verse 18 is about seven years. Israel's failure at Kadesh Barnea at which time Caleb was forty years old to their crossing of the Jordan was thirty-eight years. He was eighty-five when the Conquest was over, which means that at least seven years had been devoted to the campaign.

The Anakim mentioned in 11:21–22 were a race of giants, descendants of Anak, who were greatly feared by the ten unbelieving men who had spied out Canaan. The two believing spies, Joshua and Caleb, didn't fear them but had trusted the Lord for victory. Joshua's victory over the Anakim is recorded in Joshua 11:21–22.

Thirty-three kings are named in Joshua 12, beginning with Sihon and Og whose lands were east of Jordan and had been conquered under the leadership of Moses. The sixteen kings defeated in the southern campaign are listed in Joshua 12:9–16 and the fifteen northern kings in verses 17–24.

Read Joshua 11. Pray and answer the following questions:

6. What promise did God make to Joshua in 11:6? Why do you think Joshua needed this promise?

7. What was done to the king, the city and the people of Hazor? (11:10-15)

8. Why did the southern and northern kings decide to fight Israel rather than try to make treaties like Gibeon did? (11:20).

9. Who were the Anakim? Where did they live?

Read Joshua 12. Pray and answer the following questions:

10. Summarize what Joshua 12 is all about?

11. Why do you think the author of Joshua included this list in chapter 12 in his book?

12. Think of a battle for God's kingdom in which you are engaged. How can you be sure you are fighting the battles the Lord has chosen for you, and relying on His power rather than your own skills?

Personality Profile: Jephthah

Overcoming a Tough Start

What hope is there for a child born to a prostitute? Society tends to have low expectations and sometimes downright hostility for people born out of wedlock. That was the case for Jephthah.

The product of his father's affair with a prostitute, Jephthah was not only excluded but cut off from his family. Like many rejects, he led the life of a criminal, though he and his gang of raiders may have harassed the Ammonites more than the Israelites.

To Jephthah's surprise, when Israel faced war with Ammon, the leaders in his home town came looking for him to deliver them. They offered no apology, just merely appealed for help. To his credit, Jephthah agreed to help them after negotiating his terms, and God gave him the victory.

Jephthah's life is a good illustration of the truth that God does not judge people on the basis of appearances. He can understand any background and use any set of circumstances to accomplish His will.

Commentary provided by Warren Wiersbe and others

Studies in the Book of Joshua
Lesson 10 - Joshua 13:1-17:18
The Abundant Life
Inheritances

Throughout the conquest of Canaan, Gilgal had been the center of operations for Israel. Later, Joshua moved the camp and the tabernacle to a more central location at Shiloh.

We don't know Joshua's exact age at this time in Israel's history, although he could well have been 100. Caleb was 85, and it's likely that Joshua was the older of the two. Joshua lived to be 110, and the events described in the last half of the book could well have taken over ten years.

Caleb might have been eighty-five years old, but he didn't look for an easy task, suited to an "old man." He asked Joshua for mountains to climb and giants to conquer! His strength was in the Lord, and he knew that God would never fail him. The secret of Caleb's life is found in a phrase that's repeated six times in Scripture: *"he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel."*

In Joshua 15, we see Caleb providing for the next generation. Some of Caleb's daring faith rubbed off on his son-in-law Othniel, who later became a judge in the land. Caleb's faith also touched his daughter, for she had the faith to ask her father for a field and then for springs of water to irrigate the land. Caleb's example of faith was more valuable to his family than the property he claimed for them.

Ephraim and Manasseh were the sons of Joseph, whom Jacob "adopted" and especially blessed. Since the tribe of Levi wasn't given any territory, these two tribes made up the difference so that there were still twelve tribes in Israel. The birth order was "Manasseh and Ephraim," but Jacob reversed it. God rejects our first birth and gives us a second birth. He accepted Abel and rejected Cain; He rejected Ishmael and accepted Isaac, Abraham's second-born son; He rejected Esau and accepted Jacob.

Joshua had a problem with the children of Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh), who complained because the Lord didn't give them enough room! You can detect their pride as they told Joshua what a "great people" they were. After all, didn't Jacob personally adopt and especially bless them? And hadn't they multiplied in a great way? And wasn't Joshua from the tribe of Ephraim? They were a special people who deserved special treatment.

Joshua told his brethren that, if they were such a great people, now was their opportunity to prove it! Let them do what Caleb did and defeat the giants and claim the mountains! It's worth noting that the people of Ephraim and Manasseh seemed to be given to criticism and pride. They not only created problems for Joshua but also for Gideon, Jephthah, and even David.

Read Joshua 13:1-17:18. Pray and answer the following questions:

1. Why do you think the author includes so much detail about which land was allotted to each tribe? (See 1:6, 11:23, 21:43-45)
2. Why do you think the dividing of the land was so important to the Jewish people?
3. Read Psalm 16:5-6. What is your lot, portion and inheritance? How does knowing this affect your priorities and actions?
4. Who was Caleb? What and why was a special inheritance given to him? (See 14:6-12)
5. What did Caleb have to do to take the city?

6. What did he offer to the man who would capture Debir?

7. What request did Caleb's daughter make of him? (See 15:18-19)

8. What mistake did they commit regarding the Canaanites? (See 16:10)

9. What complaint was raised by some descendants of Joseph? (See 17:14-16)

10. How did Joshua respond to them? (See 17:17-18)

11. Are you in any way like the tribes of Joseph? If so how? (See 17:14)

Caleb **“Give Me This Mountain”**

Caleb is a case study in uncompromising faithfulness and seasoned courage. When the entire nation wanted to quit its journey at Kadesh Barnea and return to Egypt, he and Joshua stood against them, convinced that God would deliver on His promise to give them the land. As the older man, Caleb was probably the spokesperson, even though Joshua became the successor to Moses.

As a result of his courageous stand for God, Caleb not only entered Canaan but helped Moses divide the land, and led his people, Judah, in the possession of their territory. God seemed to prolong Caleb's life as a reminder to a younger generation that He fulfills His word.

Convinced of that truth, 85 year old Caleb could be heard to cry, "*Give me this mountain!*" as he looked upon Hebron. Once his request was granted, he boldly drove out the Anakim who lived there. In the end, Caleb's persevering faith won out over both the size of his enemies and the fear of his friends.

Commentary provided by Warren Wiersbe and others

Studies in the Book of Joshua
Lesson 11 - Joshua 18:1-21:45
The Abundant Life
God's Provisions

Five tribes now had been given their inheritance as Joshua, Eleazer, and the twelve tribal leaders cast lots at Gilgal. Then Joshua moved the camp to Shiloh, in the territory of Ephraim, where the tabernacle remained until David moved the ark to Jerusalem. The Lord must have directed Joshua to make this move or he would not have done it. Shiloh was centrally located and was more convenient for all the tribes.

Seven tribes still had to have their inheritance marked out for them, and apparently they were slow to respond to the challenge. Unlike Caleb and the daughters of Zelophehad, these tribes didn't have faith and spiritual zeal. These tribes had helped fight battles and defeat the enemy, but now they hesitated to claim their inheritance and enjoy the land God had given them.

When the nation was still on the other side of the Jordan, God told Moses to have the people set aside special cities for the Levites, as well as six "cities of refuge." Now that the tribes had received their territories, Joshua could assign these cities.

The tribe of Levi didn't have territory assigned to it but was scattered throughout the land. This way, they could teach the people the Law and influence each of the tribes to be faithful to the Lord. But the Levites needed places to live and pastures for their cattle. God assigned forty-eight cities for them to live in, along with a specific amount of land for pasture. The pasture land could not be sold, but their houses could. The Levites even had special privileges for redeeming their property.

As the people of God, we can claim these assurances by faith. God's covenant with us is not going to fail; God's power and wisdom can give us victory over every foe; and God's promises can be trusted, no matter what the circumstances may be. The covenant of God, the power of God, the promises of God. These are the spiritual resources we can depend on as we claim our inheritance in Jesus Christ.

Read Joshua 18:1-21:45. Pray and answer the following questions:

1. How many tribes had received their inheritance? How many remained to inherit? (See 18:2)

2. What criticism did Joshua raise? How was the land to be divided? (See 18:3-10)

3. Which tribe received the first lot? Its land lay between what tribes? (See 18:11-28)

4. Who received the last lot? Where was it? What did they add later? (See 19:40-48)

5. What inheritance was Joshua given? (See 19:49-51)

6. How is Joshua a model for Christian leaders? (See 19:49-50)

7. Explain the purpose of the cities of refuge? (See 20:1-6)

8. What important truths about God, His character and His values do you learn from the forming of these cities?

9. Why do you think the Lord wanted cities in each tribe inhabited by students of His Word and men devoted to worship?

10. Why do you think He put the Levites in charge of the cities of refuge? Why was this job so perfect for them?

11. Why doesn't 13:1 contradict 21:43-45 and 11:23? How are both perspectives true and important to remember in your life?

Risk and Responsibility

An inheritance can be a blessing to a family, but it can also be a terrible curse that divides family members. A lot depends on who manages the disbursements of the assets and how they will do their job.

When Israel divided Canaan, it was Joshua's job to act somewhat like a trustee of an estate, making sure that each tribe received the lands to which it was entitled. It was a delicate job that required him to act with great integrity. Otherwise he might be charged with being unfair in assigning boundaries or with neglecting commitments previously made by Moses.

Joshua handled his responsibility by seeking the welfare of the Twelve Tribes first before asking for land himself. In doing so, he ran the risk of having to settle for a leftover, second best portion of Canaan.

This policy was in marked contrast to that of the Canaanite and Amorite kings of the city-states that the Israelites were inheriting. The pagan kings generally lorded it over their people, choosing for themselves the first and the best. Joshua took the posture of a “servant-leader,” forsaking greed and self-interest in order to seek the highest good for his people.

Joshua’s example is worth following today. As we accept responsibilities and make decisions that affect others, our challenge is to do the right thing by seeking justice, trusting God to work out the details.

Commentary provided by Warren Wiersbe and others

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

Studies in the Book of Joshua
Lesson 13 - Joshua 23:1-16
The Abundant Life
Joshua's Farewell Message

We commonly think of Joshua as a great soldier, and he was, but here we see him as a great shepherd with a loving concern for his people. He had served the Lord and the nation faithfully, now he was concerned about the people departing from the Lord and losing their inheritance. This was the same concern Peter had before he died and also the Apostle Paul. How tragic it is when one generation sacrifices to obtain God's blessing and a new generation comes along and loses everything.

Joshua called the leaders of the tribes together, probably at Shiloh. He wanted to instill in his leaders a sincere devotion to the Lord. He would die, but they would be left to carry on the work. Joshua wants them to be faithful to their God. These men had seen the wonders of the Lord, from the crossing of Jordan to that present day. Note how Joshua gives God all the glory for what had been achieved: The Lord fought the battles; all Joshua did was divide the land! It is good for us to remember what God has done for us. God's workers change, but His Word remains the same. Joshua assures them that God will continue to fight for them and give them victory over their enemies.

What God does for His people depends often on what the people do for God. Joshua reminds them of their responsibilities as the people of God, and his words take us back to Moses warnings in Deut. 7–11. Israel must beware of the heathen nations in the land. The only way Israel could ever hope to gain the land and claim their inheritance was by obeying the Law of God. It would take courage to trust the Word and oppose the enemy, but God would enable them.

Joshua's main concern was that Israel be a separated people and not entangle themselves with the heathen nations. They had to choose either the Lord or the heathen nations; but if they entangled themselves with the heathen, God would remove His blessings from them. The principle here in verse 13 applies to all believers: any sins we allow to remain in our lives become traps and thorns to us.

We cannot help but notice Joshua's emphasis on the Word of God. "*There has not failed one Word of all His good promise.*" To obey His Word means victory and blessing; to disobey it means defeat and disappoint.

Read Joshua 23:1-16. Pray and answer the following questions:

1. Why did Joshua call the rulers of the people together?
2. What has he promised to do?
3. What statement does Joshua make in verse 3? Why is this important in a Christian's life?
4. What were the positive things the Israelites were to do?
5. What were the negative things they were to avoid?
6. What reasons did Joshua give Israel for loving God? (See 23:9-11). What are some specific ways that you can show your love to God?
7. Verse 10 says, "*The Lord your God is He who fights for you, as He promised you.*" How would this verse be an encouragement for the future of Israel and how does it encourage you?

8. What does verse 14 tell us about God's character?

9. In verse 15-16 we see two sides of God's truthfulness which Joshua reveals. Why is it important for us to understand both sides?

10. What are some of the false gods of our culture? How can you avoid engaging and bowing down to them?

Joshua wanted to prepare the next generation. We have seen through this study, that he was old and advanced in years. Soon he would leave and go to be with the Lord. What would happen to the Israelites after he was gone? What would happen to the next generation? Would the work Joshua started continue or disappear without him around? Joshua was a disciple maker. Disciple makers desire to train up the next generation so that even when they are absent or have to leave the work will go on. Moses had trained and prepared Joshua to take over the work when he was gone. Now Joshua wanted to make sure others were ready to take the mantle. In the book of Judges, we learn that the effort to train up the next generation was not entirely successful. Here we learned that at least Joshua tried. He cared about the people. He cared about what would happen to them when he was gone. He did what he could to help encourage them to follow the Lord themselves because of what he had done for them.

Joshua gives all the glory to God for the successes in his life. When people approach the end of their lives, they begin to think about what legacy they will leave behind. Joshua is not like this at all. He is not thinking about himself. He wants the people to remember God's work on their behalf. He is not concerned about his legacy, he is concerned about God's legacy, wanting to give God glory for all that has happen.

Here's Some Key Verse's from This Lesson

On God's Promises: Jer. 1:12, Ezek. 12:28, 2 Peter 3:9, Ps. 91

On the Consequences of Sin: Pro. 14:12, Isa. 59:2

On Standing Firm: 1 Cor. 10:12

On Treasuring and Clinging to God's Word: Job 23:12, Pro. 3:7, Pro. 16:16

Studies in the Book of Joshua
Lesson 14 - Joshua 24:1-33
The Abundant Life
Joshua Speaks to the People

After encouraging the leaders, Joshua calls all the people together at Shechem, a place dear to the heart of Israel since it was at Shechem that God first promised the land to Abraham. Here also, Jacob built an altar and he exhorted his family to put away their idols. While there are no “holy places” on earth, there are places that spark special memories to the believer.

Joshua was concerned that the people not fall into idolatry because of the influence of the heathen nations around them. Israel was prone to worship idols, and Joshua knew that idolatry would cause them to give up their inheritance. So he uses several arguments to encourage them to devote themselves completely to the Lord.

Joshua goes all the way back to the birth of the nation in the call of Abraham. Abraham and his father were idolaters until God called them in His grace. God called Abraham, not because of his goodness, for he was a heathen man, but because of God’s grace and love. God gave the land to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God protected the Jews in Egypt and then delivered them by His mighty hand. He led them and provided for them in the wilderness. He defeated nations for their sake. He brought them over the Jordan River into the Promised Land and drove out the enemies before them. What more could God have done for His people! Now they had claimed their inheritances and were enjoying the blessings of the land. How they ought to love and serve the Lord. Now it is Joshua’s turn to lay a choice before a new generation and call them to renew their covenant before he departs.

As we close this book, may we not forget that Christ is our Joshua (Savior), and that He fights our battles for us and helps us claim the inheritance.

Read Joshua 24:1-33. Pray and answer the following questions:

1. Verse one says “*Then Joshua gathered.*” What happen right before this?
2. Who was Joshua speaking to? Why?
3. Why does Joshua review the history of Israel? What lesson could they learn from their history?
4. What conclusions did Joshua reach based on their history? (See 24:14)
5. What lessons can we learn by reviewing family histories?
6. What choice did Joshua give them in verse 15?
7. What attitude does Joshua show in this verse with the statement “*but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord*”?

8. Do we have this same choice in our lives today? What is the better choice for us as believers? What could the result be of choosing to serve or not serve the Lord?

9. What does Joshua mean in verse 19 when he says: “*You cannot serve the Lord*”?

10. Do you have a desire to serve the Lord? In what way?

11. In a few words, what would you say the book of Joshua is all about?

12. What truths did you learn from studying the book of Joshua that you can personally apply to your life?

Do We Really Own Anything?

Joshua 24:13

Do you own your own possessions or do they own you? The Lord told Israel, “*I have given you the land*” Joshua 24:13. This indicates that the land ultimately belonged to the Lord. Israel took possession of it as a gift from His hand, a resource to be treasured and managed wisely. Elsewhere, Scripture states that all our possessions as human beings ultimately come from a good God.

- The earth itself, with all of its resources, is a gift from God (Gen. 1:29-31, 2:15, 9:2-3, Ps. 8:6-8).
- The ability to work and earn a living is a gift from God (Deut. 8:18, Ps. 8:6).
- The capacity to enjoy the basic elements of life: (Food, Family, Work) is a gift from God. (Eccl. 3:13, 5:19).

However, these gifts do not come without condition. Like anything else in the world, God’s gifts are temporary. Someday we will give an account for what we have done with and to them. (Gen. 9:5, Rom. 14:12, 2 Cor. 5:10).

Like Israel to Canaan, all of us are called to a life of thankful dependence on God and stewardship of the resources He has given us. What are you doing with God’s gift to you? Are you serving Him and serving other people with equality and compassion at home, on the job in your community?