



EXPLORE **THE BIBLE.**

Adults

Joshua; Judges; Ruth

Daily Discipleship Guide

Summer 2026



MAKING HISTORY

History never occurs in a vacuum. Any number of forces move individuals toward action. And those actions shape history. It might be tempting to think people know they are making history in the moment, but, in most cases, that's not how it works.

Sure, we can identify times when historical figures knew they were setting a new standard. America's founding fathers probably had a sense of history in 1776. And Neil Armstrong recognized the importance of "one small step for man" as he touched the moon's surface in 1969.

But those moments are the exceptions, not the rule. For the most part, history only becomes history over time. The books of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth give us a snapshot of Israel's history and the people who helped make it. Moses, the nation's main history maker since it left Egypt, was gone. Now, Israel looked to Joshua to lead them into the promised land.

Later, in their own way, the judges made their mark on history. Meanwhile, an obscure Moabitess named Ruth rewrote the direction of history—for Israel and for every member of the human race. These people were not perfect, but God used them to make a difference because that's what God does.

God has a plan for your life, as well. He wants to use you to change history. But before you can touch the future, you've got to come clean with Him in the present. You do that through a personal relationship with Him through His Son, Jesus. If you've never made the decision to follow Him, you can do it today. Here's all you need to do . . .

-
- ▶ **ADMIT** to God that you are a sinner. Repent, turning from your sin.
 - ▶ **BY FAITH RECEIVE** Jesus as God's Son and accept His gift of forgiveness from sin. He took the penalty for your sin by dying on the cross.
 - ▶ **CONFESS** your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. You may pray a prayer similar to this as you call on God to save you: "Dear God, I know that You love me. I confess my sin and need of salvation. I turn away from my sin and place my faith in Jesus as my Savior and Lord. In the name of Jesus I pray, amen."

After you have received Jesus Christ into your life, tell a pastor or another Christian about your decision. Show others your faith in Christ by asking for baptism by immersion in your local church as a public expression of your faith.



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*Evangelistic Emphasis

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- ▶ “Moses my servant is dead. Now you and all the people prepare to cross over the Jordan to the land I am giving the Israelites. I have given you every place where the sole of your foot treads, just as I promised Moses” (Josh. 1:2-3).

From the very first verses of the book of Joshua, God communicated His plans for His people. They would (finally!) cross the Jordan River and enter the promised land. A generations-old commitment God made to Abraham would at long last be realized. Joshua would be their new leader. The next steps of their journey were important ones. Courage would be needed. Deep faith in God, the One who had painstakingly led them thus far, was a requirement. Stepping out in faith would be a daily exercise.



As we study the Israelites’ entrance into the promised land and the years that follow, let’s not miss the details. God’s plans for His people and His faithfulness to His promises shouldn’t be overlooked. He would use faithful men and women to accomplish what He had in mind. The Israelites’ faith would be tested. Through it all, God’s character would be on full display.

I hope this quarter’s study brings you a deeper understanding of God’s Word, preparing you for any “next steps” God has for you. May His promises give you daily strength to faithfully follow where He leads.

In Him,

Amber Vaden

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BIBLE READING PLAN



JUNE

- 1. Joshua 1:1-18
- 2. Joshua 2:1-14
- 3. Joshua 2:15-24
- 4. Joshua 3:1-17
- 5. Joshua 4:1-13
- 6. Joshua 4:14-24
- 7. Joshua 5:1-15
- 8. Joshua 6:1-14
- 9. Joshua 6:15-27
- 10. Joshua 7:1-15
- 11. Joshua 7:16-26
- 12. Joshua 8:1-13
- 13. Joshua 8:14-29
- 14. Joshua 8:30-35
- 15. Joshua 9:1-15
- 16. Joshua 9:16-27
- 17. Joshua 10:1-15
- 17. Joshua 10:16-27
- 19. Joshua 10:28-43
- 20. Joshua 11:1-15
- 21. Joshua 11:16-23
- 22. Joshua 12:1-24
- 23. Joshua 13:1-33
- 24. Joshua 14:1-15
- 25. Joshua 15:1-19
- 26. Joshua 15:20-63
- 27. Joshua 16:1-10
- 28. Joshua 17:1-18
- 29. Joshua 18:1-28
- 30. Joshua 19:1-51

JULY

- 1. Joshua 20:1-9
- 2. Joshua 21:1-45
- 3. Joshua 22:1-12
- 4. Joshua 22:13-26
- 5. Joshua 22:27-34
- 6. Joshua 23:1-16
- 7. Joshua 24:1-13
- 8. Joshua 24:14-33
- 9. Judges 1:1-20
- 10. Judges 1:21-36
- 11. Judges 2:1-13
- 12. Judges 2:14-23
- 13. Judges 3:1-11
- 14. Judges 3:12-31
- 15. Judges 4:1-10
- 16. Judges 4:11-24
- 17. Judges 5:1-15
- 17. Judges 5:16-31
- 19. Judges 6:1-10
- 20. Judges 6:11-24
- 21. Judges 6:25-32
- 22. Judges 6:33-40
- 23. Judges 7:1-14
- 24. Judges 7:15-25
- 25. Judges 8:1-9
- 26. Judges 8:10-21
- 27. Judges 8:22-35
- 28. Judges 9:1-21
- 29. Judges 9:22-41
- 30. Judges 9:42-57
- 31. Judges 10:1-18

AUGUST

- 1. Judges 11:1-11
- 2. Judges 11:12-28
- 3. Judges 11:29-40
- 4. Judges 12:1-15
- 5. Judges 13:1-16
- 6. Judges 13:17-25
- 7. Judges 14:1-9
- 8. Judges 14:10-20
- 9. Judges 15:1-13
- 10. Judges 15:14-20
- 11. Judges 16:1-11
- 12. Judges 16:12-20
- 13. Judges 16:21-31
- 14. Judges 17:1-13
- 15. Judges 18:1-13
- 16. Judges 18:14-31
- 17. Judges 19:1-15
- 17. Judges 19:16-30
- 19. Judges 20:1-10
- 20. Judges 20:11-28
- 21. Judges 20:29-48
- 22. Judges 21:1-12
- 23. Judges 21:13-25
- 24. Ruth 1:1-15
- 25. Ruth 1:16-22
- 26. Ruth 2:1-9
- 27. Ruth 2:10-23
- 28. Ruth 3:1-9
- 29. Ruth 3:10-18
- 30. Ruth 4:1-12
- 31. Ruth 4:13-22

MEMORY VERSES



SESSION 1:

This book of instruction must not depart from your mouth; you are to meditate on it day and night so that you may carefully observe everything written in it. For then you will prosper and succeed in whatever you do. - Joshua 1:8

SESSION 2:

By faith Rahab the prostitute welcomed the spies in peace and didn't perish with those who disobeyed. - Hebrews 11:31

SESSION 3:

I will remember the LORD's works; yes, I will remember your ancient wonders. I will reflect on all you have done and meditate on your actions. - Psalm 77:11-12

SESSION 4:

So the troops shouted, and the rams' horns sounded. When they heard the blast of the ram's horn, the troops gave a great shout, and the wall collapsed. The troops advanced into the city, each man straight ahead, and they captured the city. - Joshua 6:20

SESSION 5:

Don't be deceived: God is not mocked. For whatever a person sows he will also reap. - Galatians 6:7

SESSION 6:

My brothers who went with me caused the people to lose heart, but I followed the LORD my God completely. - Joshua 14:8

SESSION 7:

"Then get rid of the foreign gods that are among you and turn your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel." So the people said to Joshua, "We will worship the LORD our God and obey him." - Joshua 24:23-24

SESSION 8:

That whole generation was also gathered to their ancestors. After them another generation rose up who did not know the LORD or the works he had done for Israel. - Judges 2:10

SESSION 9:

"But I will be with you," the LORD said to him. "You will strike Midian down as if it were one man." - Judges 6:16

SESSION 10:

The LORD said to Gideon, "You have too many troops for me to hand the Midianites over to them, or else Israel might elevate themselves over me and say, 'I saved myself.'" - Judges 7:2

SESSION 11:

The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. Therefore my heart celebrates, and I give thanks to him with my song. - Psalm 28:7

SESSION 12:

But Ruth replied: Don't plead with me to abandon you or to return and not follow you. For wherever you go, I will go, and wherever you live, I will live; your people will be my people, and your God will be my God. - Ruth 1:16

SESSION 13:

In him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. - Colossians 1:14



Joshua

The book of Joshua is named after the man who became the leader of Israel when Moses died. It contains the record of the Israelites who crossed the Jordan River to enter the promised land. The twenty-four chapters of the book are divided into four sections. The first section is chapters 1–5. It describes how the Israelites crossed the Jordan and how God prepared the nation for its conquest of Canaan. The second section, chapters 6–12, describes how the Israelites conquered the land and records who they defeated. Third, chapters 13–21 explain how Joshua and Israel’s leaders divided and allocated the land to each of the tribes. The final section, chapters 22–24, comprises Joshua’s final words of exhortation and warning to Israel.

Judges

The book of Judges is divided into three sections. Its introduction in 1:1–3:6 provides a general overview of what happened to the Israelites in the land of Canaan from the time just after Joshua died until the rise of Israel’s first king, Saul. Because the Israelites violated the Lord’s covenant He had made with their forefathers, He declared that He would no longer drive out the Canaanites who remained after Joshua died (2:21). As a result, the period of the judges was one of the darkest times in Israel’s history.

Judges 3:7–16:31 is the main section of the book. It describes the events that took place during the time of the judges. There are twelve judges in all mentioned in the book. However, six of the judges receive much more attention than the other six judges. The final section of the book of Judges (17:1–21:25) describes two events that illustrate just how morally depraved Israel became as they lived in an anarchy when “everyone did whatever seemed right to him” during the period of the judges.

Ruth

The setting of the book of Ruth is the period of the judges, which bridges the time between the conquest and the rise of King David. David’s genealogy forms the conclusion of this book. Therefore, Ruth was written sometime after David was born. The book shows that the messianic line goes through a heritage of godly people such as Boaz and Ruth to David. Their virtues stand in contrast to the corrupt nation of Israel during the period of the judges. Nevertheless, even in Israel’s darkest times, the Lord did not forget His covenant promises to His people. This is also ironic given Ruth was a Moabitess, demonstrating that often God graciously includes and uses the most unlikely people to carry out His purposes.



Joshua

I. Preparation for Possessing the Land (Josh. 1:1–5:12)

II. Victories in the Land (Josh. 5:13–12:24)

III. Allotment of the Land (Josh. 13:1–21:45)

IV. Worship of God in the Land (Josh. 22:1–24:33)

Judges

I. Prologue (Judg. 1:1–3:6)

II. The Judges (Judg. 3:7–16:31)

III. Epilogue (Judg. 17:1–21:25)

Ruth

I. A Family Fleeing (Ruth 1:1–22)

II. A Family Sought (Ruth 2:1–3:18)

III. A Family Redeemed (Ruth 4:1–22)



USING THE DAILY DISCIPLESHIP GUIDE

A person's spiritual growth hinges on daily Bible engagement. *Daily* implies a discipline much like exercising, brushing teeth, or eating a certain number of calories EVERY day. Our spiritual training should be no different since we need spiritual nourishment every day. The focus is the *Bible*, God's Word. There is nothing wrong with knowing the thoughts of great philosophers, leaders, or theologians, as long as God's Word is the final word on the matter. Engagement carries the idea of participation and involvement. *Engagement* is active, requiring us to read, study, and reflect.

Your *Daily Discipleship Guide* is full of tools to help you engage with God's Word. But like any tool, you have to use it to get the benefit.

- Use this resource when studying with a group. The first four pages of each session help the group examine a Bible passage and move us toward acting on the truths discovered as a group and an individual.
- Use the **Talk It Out** page to hold yourself and others accountable by meeting in a smaller group of same-sex individuals (an accountability group). Share with the smaller group what God has been teaching you through the group time and your personal daily Bible study while working to memorize a Bible verse.
- Use the **Daily Exploration** pages to go deeper into God's Word, building on your group's study experience. Engage in daily Bible study, record your thoughts, reflect on the questions, and take action.
- Use the resource every week even when you are unable to attend the group's Bible study. Missing a group Bible study does not excuse you from being engaged daily with God through His Word.

Want this resource on your phone or tablet for when you are on the go? Purchase an eBook at goExploreTheBible.com or at Lifeway.com/digitalstudies.





Getting the most from Talk It Out

Talk It Out supports groups of three or four people who come together weekly to encourage, share, and sharpen each other. While other issues may be addressed, the Talk It Out section focuses on the weekly memory verse. The questions and comments provide a means for encouraging each other to memorize Scripture while reflecting on the main point of that week's lesson.

These groups are made up of three to four people...

- Participants should be of the same gender.
- These groups should be smaller on purpose.
- These groups can meet at almost any location.
- These groups can easily accommodate each other's schedules.

Some married couples may choose to use the Talk It Out section for a weekly family devotional activity.

...Who meet weekly...

- We were created to relate, so meeting weekly is important.
 - In some cases, your smaller group may need to meet virtually. You may find it best to meet face-to-face every other week or once a month and use virtual tools the other weeks.
-

...To hold each other accountable and encourage each other in their spiritual growth.

- Review the questions and comments in Talk It Out.
- Look for ways the memory verse relates to the main point of the lesson.
- Include time to pray for each other.

SESSION 1

Strong and Courageous

JOSHUA 1:1-11,16-18

JOSHUA'S COURAGE WAS GROUNDED IN THE ASSURANCE
OF GOD'S TRUSTWORTHINESS.



Russell Kelso Carter was a professor at the Pennsylvania Military Academy in 1886 when he wrote “Standing on the Promises.” For over a century this great hymn has been sung by believers all over the world. Why? Because its lyrics remind believers that God is trustworthy and His promises “cannot fail.” Consequently, those who are trusting in God “cannot fail.” Joshua discovered these truths and grounded his courage in the assurance of God’s trustworthiness.

WHAT MAKES A PERSON TRUSTWORTHY?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

There are few things more intimidating than being the replacement of a person in leadership who is revered by those whom he led and is the only leader they have ever known. This was the situation when God called Joshua to succeed Moses.

The Lord providentially prepared Moses to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. He was raised by Pharaoh’s daughter and thus grew up knowing the ways of the Egyptians and the plight of the Israelites. God providentially moved him to Midian, where he learned the ways of the wilderness. Then God commissioned him to become His leader and bring Israel out of Egypt. God performed many wondrous miracles through Moses. At Mount Sinai, God gave Moses the law to give to the people. Exodus 33:11 states, “The LORD would speak to Moses face to face.”

When God called Joshua to be Moses’s replacement, humanly speaking, Joshua had every reason to be intimidated. He had witnessed many of the things God did through Moses. However, as with Moses, God had

prepared Joshua for his task. Joshua had led the Israelites into battle and witnessed God give them victory (Ex. 17:9-13). He accompanied Moses part way up Mount Sinai when Moses went alone to the top to receive God’s law, and he returned with Moses when Moses confronted Israel and its sin (24:13-18; 32:15-20). From the time he was a young man, Joshua served as Moses’s assistant until Moses’s death (33:11). Furthermore, Joshua along with Caleb were the only two spies who saw the promised land and believed that God would give it to them (Num. 14:6-10). Finally, just before Moses’s death, God told Moses that Joshua had His Spirit in him. He instructed Moses to bring Joshua before the high priest and the entire community of Israel to lay his hands on him and commission him to be his replacement (Num. 27:18-22).

God’s assignment for Joshua would be different in nature from Moses’s assignment. Nonetheless, as with Moses, God prepared Joshua for the task before him. There was every reason for Joshua to trust the Lord and be strong and courageous.



Joshua 1:1-11,16-18

1 After the death of Moses the LORD's servant, the LORD spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses's assistant: **2** "Moses my servant is dead. Now you and all the people prepare to **cross over** **A** the Jordan to the land I am giving the Israelites. **3** I have given you every place where the **sole of your foot** **B** treads, just as I promised Moses. **4** Your territory will be from the wilderness and Lebanon to the great river, the Euphrates River—all the land of the Hittites—and west to the Mediterranean Sea. **5** No one will be able to **stand against you** **C** as long as you live. I will be with you, just as I was with Moses. I will not leave you or **abandon** **D** you. **6** Be strong and courageous, for you will distribute the land I swore to their ancestors to give them as an inheritance. **7** Above all, be strong and very courageous to observe carefully the **whole instruction** **E** my servant Moses commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right or the left, so that you will have success wherever you go. **8** This **book of instruction** **F** must not depart from your mouth; you are to **meditate** **G** on it day and night so that you may carefully observe everything written in it. For then you will prosper and succeed in whatever you do. **9** Haven't I commanded you: be strong and courageous? Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go." **10** Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, **11** "Go through the camp and tell the people, 'Get provisions ready for yourselves, for **within three days** **H** you will be crossing the Jordan to go in and take possession of the land the LORD your God is giving you to inherit.'" [. . .] **16** They answered Joshua, "Everything you have commanded us we will do, and everywhere you send us we will go. **17** We will obey you, just **as we obeyed Moses** **I** in everything. Certainly the LORD your God will be with you, as he was with Moses. **18** Anyone who rebels against your order and does not obey your words in all that you command him, will be put to death. Above all, be strong and courageous!"

Key Words

A. God gave Joshua a specific mission: leading Israel across the Jordan River and conquering the land He had promised to their ancestors (Gen. 12:7; 13:14-15; 15:18-22).

B. Moses never got to set foot in Canaan. Joshua, however, would lead the people into the land.

C. The Hebrew literally refers to a person's face, but it can also mean "presence." God would force Joshua's enemies away from him.

D. The Hebrew implies being left to solve one's own problems. God would not do this.

E. To God, partial obedience is disobedience. Full obedience would be key to Joshua's success.

F. God's words given to Moses and placed in the ark of the covenant by the Levites (Deut. 31:26).

G. Literally, "muttering." The image is repeating the words to oneself until they are internalized.

H. In the past, the people had faltered on Canaan's border (Num. 13-14). Here, Joshua immediately challenged them to fulfill God's commands.

I. The tribes east of the Jordan River had promised to help their brothers defeat their enemies in Canaan (Num. 32). They affirmed this commitment to Joshua.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. God's Promise

(Josh. 1:1-5)

We can find courage in the truth that God keeps His promises.

- **How have you experienced God's faithfulness?**

2. Joshua's Assignment

(Josh. 1:6-11)

We can discern God's best for our lives by studying His Word.

- **How does God's Word provide courage and direction for our lives?**
- **What role does God's Word play in our definition of success?**

3. Israel's Response

(Josh. 1:16-18)

We can encourage the kingdom work of others by supporting them and partnering with them.

- **How does a shared commitment to God's purposes encourage other people?**

Apply the Text

As a group, discuss how you can encourage, support, and partner with one another in kingdom work.

- **What are the advantages to having a commitment to working together with other believers over having an individualistic mentality toward kingdom work?**

KEY DOCTRINE:

The Scriptures

The Holy Bible is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. (See Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 2 Timothy 3:16-17.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Note repeated words and phrases to gain additional insights.

Biblical writers sometimes used repetition of key words or phrases to emphasize a theme or message. Identify and examine the repeated message or challenge in Joshua 1:6,7,9,18. Who was the speaker in each instance? Who was the recipient of the challenge in each verse? Think about what this phrase's repetition helps communicate in Joshua 1:1-18. What message does the repeated phrase convey to Bible readers today?



Explore the Bible Prayer Guide

Scan here for a weekly prayer guide based on this quarter's Bible passages.



DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Joshua 1:1-3

Highlight the words “just as I promised” (v. 3).

Deuteronomy 34:1-8 records Moses’s death. The Israelites mourned Moses’s death for thirty days east of the Jordan River. But now it was time for Joshua and the people to prepare to “cross over the Jordan” and enter Canaan. God’s pointing out that Moses His servant was dead was a way of saying the time for mourning was over. There was more to be done. Moses’s death may have marked the passing of the greatest leader Israel had ever known, but God’s promises and plans for His people lived on.

The beginning of verse 3, “I have given,” is connected to the end of verse 2, “I am giving.” The Lord was emphasizing that the land the Israelites were about to conquer and inherit was His gift to His people. Giving His covenant people the promised land of Canaan was an expression of God’s grace. They needed to understand that they themselves would not and could not be able to take it themselves, even though God would use human agents to bring it to fruition. What’s more, using both the present and past tense together here recognizes that, while the Israelites were presently receiving this gift, the land had already belonged to them since God declared it so. Israel had been waiting on God’s timing to possess what was already theirs.

Verse 3 highlights God’s fulfillment of His promise. What does God’s faithfulness to keep His promises mean for you in your current circumstances?



Day 2: Joshua 1:4-5

Focus on God’s promises in verse 5.

These words closely echo the words God spoke when He described the land to Abraham in Genesis 15:18-20. The statement, “No one will be able to stand against you as long as you live,” repeats almost verbatim much of what God promised the people through Moses in Deuteronomy 11:25a. By carefully repeating these statements in this way, God was assuring Joshua and the people that He would be faithful to keep the promises He had made.

What God promised Joshua in the second part of verse 5 must have comforted Joshua and filled him with confidence at the same time. God promised, “I will be with you, just as I was with Moses.” God made the same promise to Moses when He commissioned him to lead His people out of Egypt (Ex. 3:12). Joshua’s memories of seeing what God did through Moses surely helped Joshua understand the meaning and weight of this promise. Also, God promised that He would “not leave” or “abandon” Joshua. Joshua’s success depended on the presence of God. This means the Lord would be an ever-present, faithful helper to Joshua.

How can you remind yourself daily of God’s presence in your life?



Day 3: Joshua 1:6-7

Identify the command that is repeated twice in these verses.

Earlier, the Lord instructed Moses to encourage Joshua because He would enable Joshua to lead the people into the land of Canaan and receive their inheritance from the Lord (Deut. 1:38; 3:28). Here, it was the Lord Himself who was encouraging Joshua. The Lord's command that Joshua "be strong and courageous" in these verses echoed the words of Moses's encouragement in Deuteronomy 31:6-7. Israel would need to see Joshua's strength and courage as an example to follow in the face of what would appear to be insurmountable challenges in the land of Canaan. Joshua would be the one who would distribute the land to the people as their inheritance.

Most importantly, Joshua needed to "be strong and very courageous" to "carefully" obey everything God commanded him. He was not to deviate from it at all. Obeying this command would be at the heart of Joshua's success. This is the reason the word *very* is added. Joshua's obedience to God's Word was more important than any military strategies he might employ in the heat of battle. The conquest would be more of a spiritual endeavor than it would be physical. Joshua would display his dependence on God and devotion to God through his faithful obedience to God. Then, God would receive all the glory for every victory won.

In what areas of your life do you need to be strong and courageous? What is holding you back?



Day 4: Joshua 1:8-11

Reflect on how God defines prosperity and success.

The command to not allow God's Word to "depart from your mouth" is closely connected to the command to "meditate" on God's Word. In Hebrew, the word *meditate* literally means to read in an undertone or to mutter. Joshua was commanded to continually speak God's Word to himself so that he would not only know what it said but also so that he would thoroughly obey "everything written in it." All who love the Lord will commit themselves to knowing His Word so that they may obey Him (John 14:15,21a).

God promised that Joshua would "prosper and succeed in whatever" he did if he obeyed Him. Prosperity and success in the Old Testament rarely focus on material wealth. The idea is that one will succeed in fulfilling a respectable purpose. Joshua would fulfill God's purpose for his life if he obeyed God's Word.

The Lord stated a third time for Joshua to "be strong and courageous" (see also vv. 6,7). Stating this command three times was the most emphatic way of communicating its importance in their culture. To emphasize the importance of this even more, God restated it negatively, imploring Joshua, "Do not be afraid or discouraged." From a human perspective, Joshua would have reason to be afraid, yet there was no reason to be afraid because God was with him wherever he would go.

What role does God's Word play in your definition of success? What steps can you take to ensure you do not "turn from it to the right or to the left"?



Day 5: Joshua 1:16-18

Take note of how the people responded to Joshua.

When the Israelites came to the land east of the Jordan River, the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh requested of Moses to allow them to settle on that side of the river. Moses granted their request (Num. 32:1-42; Deut. 2:26-3:17). However, Moses required them to help the other nine and a half tribes in conquering the land on the other side of the Jordan. Therefore, as the people prepared to cross the Jordan, Joshua reminded the two and a half tribes of their promise to help with the conquest (Josh. 1:13-15). They replied to Joshua by saying they would obey everything he commanded them to do just as they had obeyed Moses. Furthermore, they declared they recognized that the Lord would be with Joshua just as He was with Moses.

To communicate the gravity of this moment and the sincerity of their commitment to Joshua, these tribes committed to imposing the death penalty on any of their people who refused to obey Joshua. With that, they also encouraged Joshua as they communicated their solidarity with the Lord and support of Joshua by also calling on their leader to “be strong and courageous.”

How does the people’s response to Joshua in verse 16 challenge your attitude toward spiritual leadership?

APPLY THE TEXT

What are some of God’s promises that help you find courage in day-to-day life? How does remembering the promises of God in day-to-day life help prepare you for the challenging or difficult seasons in life?

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SESSION 2

Amazing Grace

JOSHUA 2:4-21

GOD USED RAHAB, AN IMPERFECT PERSON, TO ACCOMPLISH HIS PLANS.



The Bible demonstrates how God often uses flawed, unlikely people to do His will. For example, Abraham and Sarah both laughed in unbelief when God told them they would have a son in their old age. God made David the greatest king of Israel and established an eternal covenant with him even though David came from humble beginnings. Rahab, the Canaanite prostitute, is another unlikely person God used to accomplish His plans.

*WHY DOES GOD SO OFTEN USE UNLIKELY, IMPERFECT PEOPLE
TO ACCOMPLISH HIS PURPOSES?*

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In Deuteronomy 9:1, Moses told the nation, “Listen, Israel: Today you are about to cross the Jordan to enter and drive out nations greater and stronger than you, with large cities fortified to the heavens.” Jericho was the first of these large, fortified cities the Israelites faced as they entered the promised land. Joshua sent two spies to scout the area so they could bring him a report on what his troops should expect when they went up against it.

Archaeologists believe Jericho is one of the oldest cities in the world. It is located in the well-watered lower Jordan Valley. Its location was important because several routes that led west into the central hill country of Canaan emanated from the city. Therefore, it was a key junction for those traveling east across the Jordan into Moab and beyond.

Ancient Jericho must have been an incredible and alarming site to the spies when they saw it for the first time. It was built to defend the people who took refuge within it. Located on high ground, the city was surrounded by an immense stone wall

at its base. Higher up at the crest stood another wall that towered about forty-six feet high. There was no way the Israelites had the means to conquer this massive, fortified city on their own. Archaeologists estimate there were thousands of people within the city when the Israelites approached it.

Rahab and her family were citizens of Jericho. Joshua 2:15 indicates her house was part of the outer fortifications located on the city wall. Archaeologists have discovered that at the north end of ancient Jericho’s ruins there is a small portion of the wall that was left standing and there were houses built against it. This area is only a short distance from the Judean wilderness where the two spies Rahab saved hid for three days before returning to Joshua. Some suggest this is possibly the area where Rahab lived.



Joshua 2:4-21

4 But **the woman** **A** had taken **the two men** **B** and hidden them. So she said, “Yes, the men did come to me, but I didn’t know where they were from. **5** At nightfall, when the city gate was about to close, the men went out, and I don’t know where they were going. **Chase after them quickly,** **C** and you can catch up with them!” **6** But she had taken them up to the roof and hidden them among the **stalks of flax** **D** that she had arranged on the roof. **7** The men pursued them along the road to the fords of the Jordan, and as soon as they left to pursue them, the city gate was shut. **8** Before the men fell asleep, she went up on the roof **9** and said to them, “I know that **the LORD** **E** has given you this land and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and everyone who lives in the land is **panicking** **F** because of you. **10** For **we have heard** **G** how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two Amorite kings you completely destroyed across the Jordan. **11** When we heard this, we lost heart, and everyone’s courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on earth below. **12** Now please swear to me by the LORD that you will also show kindness to my father’s family, because I showed kindness to you. Give me a sure sign **13** that you will spare the lives of my father, mother, brothers, sisters, and all who belong to them, and save us from death.” **14** The men answered her, “We will give our lives for yours. If you don’t report our mission, we will show kindness and faithfulness to you when the LORD gives us the land.” **15** Then she let them down by a rope through the window, since she lived in a house that was built into the wall of the city. **16** “Go to the **hill country** **H** so that the men pursuing you won’t find you,” she said to them. “Hide there for three days until they return; afterward, go on your way.” **17** The men said to her, “We will be free from this oath you made us swear, **18** unless, when we enter the land, you tie this scarlet cord to the window through which you let us down. Bring your father, mother, brothers, and all your father’s family into your house. **19** If anyone goes out the doors of your house, his death will be his own fault, and we will be innocent. But if anyone with you in the house should be harmed, his death will be our fault. **20** And if you report our mission, we are free from the oath you made us swear.” **21** “Let it be as you say,” she replied, and she sent them away. After they had gone, she tied the **scarlet cord** **I** to the window.

Key Words

A. Rahab (Josh. 2:1). She refused to surrender Israel’s spies to the leaders of Jericho (6:25).

B. Joshua had sent two spies into Canaan to investigate Jericho and the surrounding area.

C. Rahab deceived the king and sent his soldiers on a wild goose chase to protect the Israelites.

D. A plant used to make clothing. Flax was harvested and set out on a flat roof to dry.

E. Despite being a Gentile, Rahab affirmed God’s work. She was confident that He would lead Israel to possess the land.

F. The Hebrew conveys the image of melting. Jericho’s residents were melting in fear of the Israelites and their God. See verse 11.

G. Israel’s enemies knew about the miracles in Egypt and the Red Sea decades earlier, as well as the recent victories over the Amorite kings.

H. The opposite direction of the king’s soldiers. Jordan’s fords were east of Jericho (v. 7), while the hills around the city were to the west.

I. Some scholars see a connection between this red cord and the blood on the Israelites’ doors at Passover.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. A Bold Act

(Josh. 2:4-7)

Following God often requires leaving one's comfort zone and stepping out in faith.

- **What is the relationship between boldness and faith?**

2. A Kind Action

(Josh. 2:8-13)

We can be encouraged that God's acts will always demonstrate His character.

- **How should our beliefs about God impact the way we treat others?**

3. A Daring Escape

(Josh. 2:14-16)

Relying on God's grace leads to security, even in difficult situations.

- **How does faith in God require obedient action?**

4. A Firm Assurance

(Josh. 2:17-21)

We can be assured of God's work in our lives by regularly reflecting on what He has done in the past.

- **If you were Rahab, how would you feel about the spies' conditions? Why?**
- **What are some signs that remind us of God's grace in our lives?**

Apply the Text

- **In your group, what are ways you can encourage one another to rely on God's grace even in difficult times?**
- **How does relying on God's grace lead to security during difficult times?**

KEY DOCTRINE:

Man

Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. (See 1 Corinthians 1:26-31; Titus 2:11-14.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Focus on a key word to gain a better understanding of a biblical text.

Look up the word "kindness" (Hebrew *hesed*) in a Bible dictionary (Josh. 2:12). What special significance does this term have in the Old Testament? Read Exodus 15:13 and 2 Samuel 16:17 where the term is used. How did Rahab show loyalty to the spies? How did the spies demonstrate loyalty to her?

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Joshua 2:4-5

Consider why Rahab was willing to take a risk.

Verses 1-3 indicate Joshua sent two spies to go and scout out the land before them, “especially Jericho.” The spies ended up at the house of a prostitute named Rahab. Her house was likely an inn, tavern, or combination of the two. There is no indication the spies had immoral intentions in choosing to stay there. With people coming and going at night, such a venue in Jericho—which was a hub for travelers from various regions—should have allowed the spies to blend in without being noticed. It is for the same reasons that the king of Jericho had his own spies there as well. Someone spotted and identified the Israelite spies and immediately reported their presence and location to Jericho’s king. The king sent men to Rahab demanding she turn in the men who “came to investigate the entire land” (v. 3). Rahab apparently expected the king’s men to come, understood the spies’ mission, and was sympathetic to their cause. Although she confirmed to the king’s men that the spies had been there, she communicated that she knew nothing about them. In fact, she said the men exited the city, she didn’t know where they were going, and the king’s men had better give chase quickly if they were to have any chance of catching up with them. In anticipation of the arrival of the king’s men, Rahab had hidden the spies from the king’s men.

When have you taken a risk for what you believe is right? What holds you back from acting courageously in your faith?



Day 2: Joshua 2:6-7

Read what the New Testament says about Rahab in Matthew 1:5; Hebrews 11:31; and James 2:25.

The flat roofs on houses in ancient Canaan enabled people to expose things to the sun—like fruit that needed to ripen and wet grain and laundry that needed drying. The making of linen from flax was a common activity in households. Part of this process required soaking the three to four feet stalks to loosen the fibers. After soaking them, people spread the stalks out on their roofs to dry. These drying stalks of flax provided a perfect place under which Rahab could hide the spies because of the size of the stalks and because the king’s agents would have been accustomed to seeing them on rooftops. Scripture does not justify Rahab’s lying any more than it does her life as a prostitute. Furthermore, the Lord in His omnipotence could have saved the spies any way He chose. What is commended in Scripture is Rahab’s faith in God; she put her life in danger to help the spies (Heb. 11:31). Rahab is also part of the lineage of Jesus (Matt. 1:5).

The king’s men believed Rahab and quickly left in pursuit. Once they exited the city, its gate was shut. These agents went as far as “the fords of the Jordan” River to find and capture the spies while Rahab still hid them in her home.

What does Rahab’s decision to hide the spies reveal about her faith in God?



Day 3: Joshua 2:8-13

Underline the words “has given” in verse 9.

Rahab explained to the spies why she covered for them. She began by sharing her knowledge of Israel’s God, declaring, “I know that the LORD has given you this land.” She used the past tense, given, not “is giving” or “will give.” Before the Israelites took a step to cross the Jordan, God had instilled a fear within Israel’s enemies because of the many victories He already had given them. After revealing her knowledge of what the Lord had done for Israel at the Red Sea and against their formidable enemies, Rahab described the impact those events had on her and her people. They “lost heart” and “everyone’s courage failed.” We can learn three important truths here: (1) God uses what He does for and through His people to reveal who He is to unbelievers, (2) He keeps His promises, and (3) unbelievers have reason to fear the Lord’s judgment.

Rahab declared her faith in God, asserting that “the LORD your God is God.” Her proclamation, He is God “in heaven above and on earth below,” indicates that she believed the Lord is the only God and there is no other. When people place their faith in the Lord, they commit themselves to His people. Rahab demonstrated this when she showed kindness to the spies.

How do your beliefs about God impact the way you treat others?



Day 4: Joshua 2:14-16

Take note of the promise the spies made to Rahab.

The spies promised Rahab they would give their lives for her life as long as she did not betray them to her people. Additionally, they promised to show Rahab “kindness and faithfulness” when it was time for the Lord to give Israel Jericho and the surrounding area. These spies saw the formidable fortifications of Jericho yet were confident the Lord would give them the victory.

The wall of the city was also a wall of Rahab’s house. It was not unusual for large, populated, walled cities to utilize every inch of space within them in this way. Acting in good faith, Rahab lowered a rope out her window, allowing the two spies to escape. As she did, she gave them instructions to keep themselves safely hidden from the king’s agents who were searching for them. She directed them to go to the Judean hill country. This was the opposite direction of the Jordan River where the king’s men expected them to flee since Israel was camped on the other side of it. She instructed them to stay hidden in those hills for three days until the king’s men gave up their search.

The spies made a promise to Rahab. How do you honor commitments you make to others?



Day 5: Joshua 2:17-21

Consider how the scarlet cord is reminiscent of the blood on the doorposts during the tenth plague in Egypt.

The spies told Rahab that if she did not follow their instructions, then they would no longer be obligated to the oath they had sworn to her. First, they told her to tie a scarlet cord to the window through which they were escaping. Its purpose was to show the Israelites what household's inhabitants they were to spare in their assault. It is reminiscent of the blood that was placed on the doorframes of the Israelites and the spared lives of the Israelite firstborn in Egypt during the tenth plague. As the Israelites trusted the Lord to spare their lives, Rahab had to trust God that His people would spare her. Second, Rahab needed to bring her family into the house and make sure they stayed there. If any of her family members failed to stay within, then the spies would not be responsible for their deaths. Third, if Rahab should betray the spies by reporting their mission to the authorities in Jericho, then they would be released from the oath they made.

Rahab communicated her faith in the Lord and His people again, saying she understood and would do as they had instructed. As soon as the spies departed, she tied the scarlet cord to the window. Her obedience was yet another demonstration of her faith in God as she put her life and the lives of her family in His hands.

Rahab demonstrated her faith by obedience. In what practical way do you need to show your faith?

APPLY THE TEXT

What has God done in your life in the past to assure you that He is at work in your life? How do God's acts in your life demonstrate His character?

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SESSION 3

◀ *Remembering God's Works* ▶

JOSHUA 3:14-4:9

GOD INSTRUCTED THE PEOPLE TO SET UP A MEMORIAL
AS A REMINDER OF HIS POWER.



Archaeologists have discovered that ancient civilizations erected statues and built monumental structures to celebrate and memorialize significant people and events. These memorials helped following generations understand their identity and recognize how they became who they are. In the Bible, God often instructed His people to erect memorials so that they would not forget who God is, that they belonged to Him, and that they could always trust Him.

WHAT ARE SOME PROMINENT MEMORIALS YOU CAN THINK OF? WHY ARE THEY SIGNIFICANT, AND WHAT IMPACT DO THEY HAVE ON PEOPLE TODAY?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Chapters 3–5 accentuate three essential things the Israelites needed to remember as they entered the land of Canaan: God’s presence, God’s power, and God’s promises. Joshua instructed the people to break camp and follow the ark of the covenant as it was carried by the levitical priests. The ark represented God’s presence with Israel. It would be the Lord who would lead His people into the promised land. We should also note that it is called the ark of the *covenant*. One of God’s covenant promises to Abraham’s descendants was the land of Canaan (Josh. 3:1-5).

When it was time to cross the Jordan, the Lord instructed the priests carrying the ark to step into the waters. Normally, this would have been a precarious situation. At that time of year, the Jordan’s banks were overflowing. Nevertheless, when the priests stepped into the water, the waters receded, making a dry path for all of Israel to cross (3:6-17; 4:23).

When every Israelite had completed crossing the Jordan, the Lord commanded Joshua to choose twelve men, one from each tribe, to each take a stone from the riverbed. They were to carry it to their new camp west of the Jordan at Gilgal to set up as a memorial so that future generations would know this miraculous thing God had done. When the priests stepped out of the Jordan’s riverbed, the river resumed its course, flowing over the banks, flooding the area just as it was before (4:1-24).

Before the Israelites proceeded, three significant things happened. First, the men were circumcised. Apparently, their parents in the wilderness disobeyed God in this matter. God required circumcision as a sign of the covenant (Gen. 17:9-14). Second, they celebrated Passover, the commemoration of their redemption from slavery in Egypt. Finally, the Lord appeared to Joshua, again revealing His presence with him and the people (5:1-15).



Joshua 3:14–4:9

3:14 When **the people** **A** broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carried the **ark of the covenant** **B** ahead of the people. **15** Now the Jordan **overflows its banks** **C** throughout the harvest season. But as soon as the priests carrying the ark reached the Jordan, their feet touched the water at its edge **16** and the water flowing downstream stood still, rising up in a mass that extended as far as **Adam**, **D** a city next to Zarethan. The water flowing downstream into the Sea of the Arabah—the Dead Sea—was completely cut off, and the people crossed opposite Jericho. **17** The priests carrying the ark of the LORD’s covenant stood firmly **on dry ground** **E** in the middle of the Jordan, while all Israel crossed on dry ground until the **entire nation** **F** had finished crossing the Jordan.

4:1 After the entire nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the LORD spoke to Joshua: **2** “Choose twelve men from the people, one man for each tribe, **3** and command them: Take **twelve stones** **G** from this place in the middle of the Jordan where the priests are standing, carry them with you, and set them down at the place where you spend the night.” **4** So Joshua summoned the twelve men he had selected from the Israelites, one man for each tribe, **5** and said to them, “Go across to the ark of the LORD your God in the middle of the Jordan. Each of you lift a stone onto his shoulder, one for each of the Israelite tribes, **6** so that this will be a sign among you. In the future, **when your children ask** **H** you, ‘What do these stones mean to you?’ **7** you should tell them, ‘The water of the Jordan was cut off in front of the ark of the LORD’s covenant. When it crossed the Jordan, the Jordan’s water was cut off.’ Therefore these stones will always be a **memorial** **I** for the Israelites.” **8** The Israelites did just as Joshua had commanded them. The twelve men took stones from the middle of the Jordan, one for each of the Israelite tribes, just as the LORD had told Joshua. They carried them to the camp and set them down there. **9** Joshua also set up twelve stones in the middle[b] of the Jordan where the priests who carried the ark of the covenant were standing. The stones are still there today.

Key Words

A. The Israelites who had come out of the wilderness and were being prepared to enter the promised land.

B. Built according to God’s design, the ark served as a reminder of His presence with His people (Ex. 25:10-22).

C. Rainfall and melting snow fed additional water into the river, creating flood conditions.

D. A city located approximately fifteen miles up the Jordan River.

E. God had led a previous generation across the Red Sea with a similar miracle (Ex. 14:15-29).

F. More than 600,000 men, with their families, livestock, and possessions (Num. 26:51).

G. Moses and, later, Elijah used twelve stones to commemorate God’s work among His people. See Exodus 28:21; 39:14; 1 Kings 18:31.

H. The Lord highlighted the priority of teaching future generations about Him. (See Ex. 13:14; Deut. 6:7-20; Ps. 78:3-8; Isa. 38:19; Acts 2:39.)

I. The stones would serve as a lasting physical illustration of God’s power and His covenant among the Israelites.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Dry Ground

(Josh. 3:14-17)

We can be sure that God never fails to provide perfectly for His people during their time of need.

- **Why are barriers an important part of our spiritual journey?**

2. Memorial Stones

(Josh. 4:1-7)

We should establish memorials in our lives that consistently remind us of God's work on our behalf.

- **What are some milestones that could remind people of God's work in their lives?**

3. Lasting Reminders

(Josh. 4:8-9)

God expects believers to remember and testify to what He has done for them.

- **How can previous experiences with God strengthen a person's faith?**
- **How can we pass on our faith stories to future generations?**

Apply the Text

Discuss how God has been at work in your Bible study group.

- **What significant things has God done over the years in your church?**
- **How could you as a group share these things with others?**

KEY DOCTRINE:

God

To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience.

(See Exodus 20:1-3; 1 Timothy 1:17.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Reflect personally on how a biblical passage applies to your own life.

Joshua and the Israelites erected a memorial of twelve stones to help them remember and testify to what the Lord had done for them in the past. What specific memorials help you recall spiritual mountaintops in your experience with the Lord? What do you want to remember from those events? What tangible object can you use to help you remember God's work in your life at that time?

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Joshua 3:14

Consider the significance of the ark of the covenant being carried before the people.

Verses 1-13 emphasize three important details that prepare us for verse 14. First, these preceding verses emphasize the ark of the covenant. The ark of the covenant represented the presence of God. The lid of the ark was called the mercy seat, representing God's throne. As verse 14 indicates, the priests were responsible for carrying it "ahead of the people." Second, in verse 7 God told Joshua that He would exalt him before the people to demonstrate that, just as He was with Moses, He would be with Joshua when they crossed the Jordan. Third, the crossing of the Jordan should be understood in light of the crossing of the Red Sea in Exodus 14. In both instances, God separated the waters and heaped them up so that the Israelites could cross on dry ground. Both miracles were displays of God's power on behalf of His people as He confirmed who His chosen leader was for Israel. As the priests carried the ark before the people, it was important for Israel to see God's demonstration of His power and glory again. Just as He led Israel out of captivity in Egypt by defeating their enemies, He was now victoriously leading them into the promised land. There, the Lord would again defeat Israel's enemies and give His people their inheritance.

How does this event compare to the crossing of the Red Sea in Exodus 14, and what does that reveal about God's consistency?



Day 2: Joshua 3:15-17

Notice how the priests and the people demonstrated faith in God's instructions.

Throughout most of the year, the Jordan River was anywhere from three to ten feet deep and ninety to a hundred feet wide. However, its being at flood stage means that the water was overflowing its banks, which also means that the depth and width of the river were significantly deeper and wider than normal. Jeremiah mentions that the Jordan had a dense thicket growing along its banks on both sides. This would have made the crossing even more difficult in its flooded state (Jer. 12:5; 49:19; 50:44). With these conditions, the river appeared to be impossible to cross. Yet when the priest's feet touched the water at its edge, the flowing water of the river stood still and then rose up just like the waters of the Red Sea. The Lord delights in demonstrating His power in circumstances that are impossible for us.

"The priests carrying the ark of the LORD's covenant" (v. 17) are important to what transpired because the ark represented God's throne and presence with His people. As the priests "stood firmly on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan" with the ark of the covenant, it showed that Israel's mighty God was the One who miraculously did this. Every Israelite was able to cross the Jordan "on dry ground" just as their parents did when they crossed the Red Sea.

How did the Israelites demonstrate trust in God's instructions? How do you need to step out in faith?



Day 3: Joshua 4:1-3

Pay attention to what God wanted the twelve men to do.

Verse 1 is connected to everything that transpired in the previous chapter. This is purposely demonstrated by the writer's repetition of the phrase "the entire nation had finished crossing the Jordan" (3:17; 4:1). Verse 17 in chapter 3 speaks of what was happening while all Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground, and verse 1 of chapter 4 addresses what happened after all the Israelites crossed the Jordan on dry ground. Everything that follows in chapter 4 must be understood in light of this miraculous thing God did for His people. Israel needed to remember this demonstration of His awesome power and faithfulness as they entered the land of Canaan and faced its challenges.

Verse 2 is also repetitive as it reiterates the instruction Joshua gave to the Israelites to choose a man from each tribe, as the Lord commanded in 3:12. In all that was happening, Joshua was careful to do what the Lord commanded him. Obedience to God's Word is essential to being a servant of the Lord and a leader of His people. In verse 3, Joshua explained what God wanted the twelve men to do. Joshua commanded each of them to return to the riverbed of the Jordan, to take a stone from the place where the priests were standing in the middle of it, and to carry their stones to the place where they would camp that evening.

Why did God command the Israelites to set up memorial stones? What does this reveal about remembering God's work?



Day 4: Joshua 4:4-7

Focus on the meaning of the twelve stones.

Joshua instructed the twelve men representing each of the tribes of Israel to "go across to the ark of the Lord your God." This highlights what Joshua 3-4 describes—Israel's crossing the Jordan on dry land and entering the place of God's inheritance, the land of Canaan. The writer's description of what transpired here should remind believers that when Jesus saved us, He brought us out of the bondage of our sin and our wandering in the wilderness of disobedience and into our inheritance, which is in Him.

When the men reached "the middle of the Jordan" where the priests stood with the ark, each of them was instructed to "lift" what apparently was a sizable stone "onto his shoulder." Each man's stone would represent the tribe to which he belonged. The stones would be a memorial of what God had done that day. It also was to be a witness to generations to come. When their children would ask them what the meaning of the stacked stones was, the parents could tell them what God had done. This should remind believers that, when God does a wonderful work in our lives, it is important for us to remember what God has done. Not only that, but it is essential we tell others what He has done, especially future generations.

What stories of God's faithfulness do you want your family to remember?



Day 5: Joshua 4:8-9

Compare these verses to Joshua 1:16-17.

The Israelites' obedience to Joshua demonstrates how God kept His promise of exalting Joshua in the sight of all Israel so they would know God was with Joshua (3:7). Their obedience also demonstrates that the people recognized Joshua's commands came from God. Though Joshua is never called a prophet, he would be God's servant and spokesman to Israel.

Verse 8 indicates the twelve men set the stones in "the camp." Verse 9 indicates Joshua set twelve stones in "the middle of the Jordan" where the priests stood. Most commentators indicate this was probably not a second memorial but a reference to the same twelve stones that were carried to the west side of the Jordan. Verse 19 indicates the camp was located in Gilgal, a place that would have great significance in the life of Israel going forward. Thus, generations to come would have the opportunity to learn the meaning of the twelve stones. The writer of the book of Joshua indicates they still stood as a memorial at the time the book was written.

What "stones of remembrance" can you set up in your own life to remind you and others of God's faithfulness?

APPLY THE TEXT

Think about significant, specific spiritual milestones in your life when God has demonstrated His power and faithfulness to you. How could you make memorials of these events in your life to help you remember what God has done and give you opportunities to testify to others of God's faithfulness and goodness?

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SESSION 4

Winning Strategy

JOSHUA 6:12-25

GOD GAVE HIS PEOPLE VICTORY WHEN THEY TRUSTED AND OBEYED HIM.



Parents of toddlers want to teach their children to trust them. Building this trust involves providing for their needs and protecting them. Some parents build trust by encouraging their child to leap into their arms. When the child makes the jump and the parent catches him, both the parent and the child are exuberant. God often calls upon His children to make what appears to be giant leaps to demonstrate that they can always trust Him as they obey Him.

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN LEARNING TO TRUST SOMEONE?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

About seven hundred years had passed since God promised Abraham He would give “this land” to Abraham’s offspring as their inheritance (Gen. 12:7). The Lord was about to fulfill that promise.

God determined that it was to be Joshua who would lead the people across the Jordan into the promised land to defeat the Canaanites and then settle into the land as the Lord had commanded them. In Joshua 1, God promised Joshua that He would always be with him and give him victory over Israel’s enemies. But He told Joshua that it would be essential for him to study and meditate on God’s Word so that he would obey God and be successful in everything that God was calling him to do.

In chapter 2, Joshua sent two spies into Jericho on a reconnaissance mission. The spies came upon Rahab. There, Rahab told the spies that the people in Jericho had heard how God saved Israel at the Red Sea and how the Israelites soundly defeated the Amorites east of the Jordan River. News of these events had struck fear in the hearts

of the men of Jericho. Be that as it may, God was not finished demonstrating His might and commitment to Israel overall and to Joshua in particular.

In chapters 3–4, God exalted Joshua as His ordained leader over Israel as He parted the flooded waters of the Jordan River and led the Israelites into the land of Canaan on dry ground.

In Joshua 5, the men of Israel renewed the covenant with the Lord by being circumcised as He had commanded. They celebrated Passover and ate from the bounty of the land of Canaan. A mysterious figure identified as the “commander of the LORD’s army” (5:14) appeared to Joshua, confirming the Lord’s presence with Joshua as they prepared for the conquest of Jericho.

Chapter 6 recounts the dramatic and miraculous conquest of Jericho, the first major Canaanite city the Israelites faced after crossing the Jordan River.



Joshua 6:12-25

12 Joshua got up early **the next morning**. **A** The priests took the ark of the LORD, **13** and the seven priests carrying seven **rams' horns** **B** marched in front of **the ark of the Lord**. **C** While the rams' horns were blowing, the armed men went in front of them, and the rear guard went behind the ark of the LORD. **14** On the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp. They did this for six days. **15** Early on the seventh day, they started at dawn and marched around the city **seven times** **D** in the same way. That was the only day they marched around the city seven times. **16** After the seventh time, the priests blew the rams' horns, and Joshua said to the troops, "Shout! For **the Lord has given you the city**." **E** **17** But the city and everything in it are set apart to the LORD for destruction. Only **Rahab** **F** the prostitute and everyone with her in the house will live, because she hid the messengers we sent. **18** But keep yourselves from the things set apart, or you will be set apart for destruction. If you take any of those things, you will set apart the camp of Israel for destruction and **make trouble** **G** for it. **19** For all the silver and gold, and the articles of bronze and iron, are dedicated to the LORD and must go into the LORD's treasury." **20** So the troops shouted, and the rams' horns sounded. When they heard the blast of the ram's horn, the troops gave a great shout, and the wall collapsed. The troops advanced into the city, each man straight ahead, and they captured the city. **21** They **completely destroyed everything** **H** in the city with the sword—every man and woman, both young and old, and every ox, sheep, and donkey. **22** Joshua said to the two men who had scouted the land, "Go to the prostitute's house and bring the woman out of there, and all who are with her, just as you swore to her." **23** So the young men who had scouted went in and brought out Rahab and her father, mother, brothers, and all who belonged to her. They brought out her whole family and settled them **outside the camp** **I** of Israel. **24** They burned the city and everything in it, but they put the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron into the treasury of the LORD's house. **25** However, Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, her father's family, and all who belonged to her, because she hid the messengers Joshua had sent to spy on Jericho, and she still lives in Israel today.

Key Words

A. The day before, God had given Joshua and the people specific instructions for capturing Jericho (6:1-11).

B. Known as a *shophar*. Often used to call Israel to battle, these trumpets also were used in worship (Ps. 81:3; Joel 2:1,15).

C. A reminder of the Lord's presence among the Israelites (Ex. 25:10-22; Num. 4:5). It had led the way across the Jordan (Josh. 3:1-4) and was prominent in the strategy against Jericho.

D. A symbol of God's perfection. Seven appears prominently in Joshua 6 with trumpets (v. 4), priests (vv. 4,13), days (v. 15), and times around the city (vv. 15-16).

E. Joshua kept the focus on God. He was the One who would fight the battle and conquer the city.

F. Rahab had protected Israel's spies from being captured in Jericho. In return, they promised to spare her family (2:1-13).

G. Disobedience would lead to judgment (Josh. 7).

H. The total destruction of Jericho demonstrated the Israelites' total obedience to God.

I. As Gentiles, they had to remain outside Israel's main body for a time. However, Rahab became part of Jesus's genealogy (Matt. 1:5).

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Instructions Obeyed

(Josh. 6:12-14)

We should obey God's directions, even when they don't make sense.

- **Have you ever been given an instruction or command that didn't make sense in the moment? What happened?**
- **How do God's unusual instructions test our faith?**

2. Victory Assured

(Josh. 6:15-19)

We experience victory in life when we obey God completely.

- **Why did God set the treasures of Jericho apart for Himself?**

3. Walls Destroyed

(Josh. 6:20-21)

We can trust God to do what only He can do.

- **What potential victory is God asking you to trust Him to provide?**

4. Promises Kept

(Josh. 6:22-25)

We can live in victory by trusting in God's promises.

- **What victories does God promise His people today?**

Apply the Text

As a group, discuss ways that the people of God in general and you as a group in particular can and should unite together to demonstrate their trust in and obedience to God.

KEY DOCTRINE: Stewardship

God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. (See Deuteronomy 10:14; Psalm 24:1.)

BIBLE SKILL: Examine New Testament passages to better understand an Old Testament passage.

The writers of both Hebrews and James referred to Rahab in their letters to first-century believers. Examine Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25 to see what these passages say about her. What are some key points each writer draws out? What are they trying to emphasize with their readers? How does that help you understand Rahab better?

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Joshua 6:12-14

Reflect on how God's instructions would have challenged the faith of His people.

Chapters 6–12 describe Israel's conquest of Canaan. Chapter 2 anticipated that the first city the Israelites would need to conquer was Jericho. Verse 1 indicates the city "was strongly fortified because of the Israelites—no one leaving or entering." This recalls the city being on high alert because of the two spies who had been spotted infiltrating it. Rahab reported to the spies that the victories God had already given Israel over their enemies had completely sapped the residents of Jericho of their courage (Josh. 2:1-11).

God laid out the plan for Joshua (6:2-5). Of first importance, the Lord told him that He had already given Jericho to Joshua. When God makes a promise for the future, it is as good as done. What the Lord required of Joshua and the people was their trust and obedience. God commanded Joshua that he and his army were to march around the city with the priests carrying the ark of the covenant in the front and seven priests ahead of the ark carrying rams' horns. Verses 12-14 indicate that "early the next morning," on the second day, Joshua, the priests, and the army arose and repeated what they had done the previous day. They continued doing this for six days just as the Lord had commanded them.

How does this passage challenge you to trust God's plans even when they don't make sense to you?



Day 2: Joshua 6:15-16

Underline "the LORD has given you."

All the instructions and activities that were given and transpired during the previous six days were in anticipation of what happened on the climactic seventh day. On the seventh day, they did not march around Jericho only once as they had done the previous six mornings; they marched around it seven times just as the Lord had commanded them.

After marching around Jericho for the past six days, marching around the city seven times on the seventh day must have been exciting to the Israelites while at the same time disconcerting to the residents of Jericho as they undoubtedly watched the circling spectacle transpire before them. After they completed the seventh lap, the priests blew the rams' horns. Then Joshua told the troops, "Shout!" But before the soldiers had an opportunity to shout, he repeated what the Lord had said to him before they started marching around Jericho on the first day: "the LORD has given you the city" (v. 16). The event in the future is already as good as done since God said He would do it. Every Israelite needed to know that what was about to happen was because of what God had already done; they needed to act in light of it. Furthermore, they needed to learn that when you follow God's plan, you will enjoy His victory.

What promises of God are awaiting your step of faith?



Day 3: Joshua 6:17-19

Underline each occurrence of the words “set apart.”

Because Rahab put her faith in the God of Israel and her life on the line to save the two Israelite spies, Joshua declared she and her family were to be spared (2:1-22). Everyone and everything else in the city were to be “set apart to the LORD for destruction.” This command refers back to the Lord’s instruction to Israel through Moses that when they entered Canaan they were to destroy all its inhabitants. If the Israelites disobeyed God in this, then the people groups in Canaan would teach the Israelites to worship idols and Israel would sin against the Lord (Deut. 20:16-18). This should serve as a reminder to believers today that we are to be separated from the world system that is under the power of the evil one (1 John 2:15-17).

Finally, Joshua told the Israelites to understand the importance of keeping themselves away from everything that was “set apart” for the Lord. If they didn’t, they too, along with all the camp of Israel, would be “set apart for destruction.” The Israelites would have opportunities to plunder their enemies in other cities they would conquer. However, given Jericho was the first, the principle of firstfruits surfaces here. Dedicating the first of what one receives acknowledges God as the Giver and also demonstrates one’s trust in Him for the future. Firstfruits are also an acknowledgment of one’s responsibility to be a faithful steward of what one has received from God to be used to serve and honor Him.

Why did God command that everything in Jericho be devoted to Him? What does this say about holiness?



Day 4: Joshua 6:20-21

Take note of how the Israelite troops did everything just as the Lord had commanded.

Verse 20 provides a summary of the fall of Jericho. The seven priests blew their rams’ horns and the army “gave a great shout,” just as Joshua had commanded them. The magnificent wall surrounding the city of Jericho collapsed. The collapse was so sudden that their war shout very likely turned into a shout of victory as they witnessed what the Lord had done for them. After that, every soldier advanced into the city and together captured it.

The Israelites did exactly as the Lord had commanded them. They “completely destroyed everything in the city.” No person or animal was spared. God’s judgment was complete as was His victory. The text gives little attention to Israel’s warriors. Instead, the emphasis of the narrative is that this victory over the people of Jericho as well as the execution of judgment on them belonged to the Lord. If only others in Jericho had put their faith in the Lord like Rahab did.

What does the fall of Jericho reveal about God’s ability to overcome obstacles?



Day 5: Joshua 6:22-25

Compare verse 24 to verse 19.

In verse 17, Joshua instructed his men to spare Rahab and her family because she protected the two spies from the king of Jericho. Therefore, it was fitting that Joshua instructed those same two men to retrieve Rahab and her family. The men brought them out of the city and settled Rahab and her family outside Israel's camp, probably because of ceremonial uncleanness according to God's law. Regarding the city of Jericho, the Israelites "burned the city and everything in it" except for all the items of silver, gold, bronze, and iron. These items were to be set apart, dedicated to the Lord, and put into the Lord's treasury as Joshua had instructed in verse 19.

In this message of God's righteous judgment of the Canaanites, we must not overlook the message of God's wondrous salvation. Rahab was a Canaanite prostitute who, like all the other residents of Jericho, was deserving of God's wrath. However, by God's mercy and grace through faith in the God of Israel, Rahab was saved from the wrath that was to come. Rahab not only declared her faith in the Lord but demonstrated it when she saved the spies. By faith, this outsider became part of the Lord's covenant people. Moreover, Matthew indicates Rahab married an Israelite named Salmon and became an ancestress of Jesus (Matt. 1:5).

What does Rahab's story teach you about God's grace and redemption?

APPLY THE TEXT

When was a time you trusted and obeyed God even when at first it was difficult to believe God would intervene or act on your behalf, but you saw that He did? Is there anything happening in your life right now where you are struggling to trust in God's promises and obey Him?

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SESSION 5

Sin Revealed

JOSHUA 7:10-23

ACHAN'S ACTIONS WERE DISCOVERED AND JUDGED BECAUSE HE DISHONORED GOD.



One of the central truths of the Bible is that every human being is a sinner. We sin against others, and every sin is a sin against God. The Bible also reveals that though we may try, we cannot hide anything from God—including our sins. What’s more, the Bible clearly declares that there will always be negative consequences for one who tries to conceal one’s sin from God. Nevertheless, there is good news. God’s Word teaches that whoever confesses and renounces their sins to God will find mercy and forgiveness.

*WHAT SHOULD BE A PERSON’S MOTIVATION
TO CONFESS SIN AND SEEK FORGIVENESS?*

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

After the account of the fall of Jericho in Joshua 6, chapters 7–12 summarize the rest of the conquest of Canaan. Joshua 7 reveals that an Israelite sinned against God when the Lord brought down the walls of Jericho. When Achan saw some of the items that were to be set apart for the Lord, he coveted them and took them for himself. Achan’s sin resulted in Israel’s initial defeat at Ai. Only when Achan was confronted and his sin dealt with could Israel move on. Joshua 8 describes how God turned away from His anger and handed over the city of Ai to the Israelites.

Israel’s victories over Jericho and Ai resulted in some of the people in Canaan forming an alliance to oppose Joshua and Israel. When the inhabitants of the city of Gibeon heard about Israel’s victories, they disguised themselves as foreigners from outside of Canaan and said they had traveled to meet the Israelites because of the reputation of their God and a desire to make a treaty with them. Without consulting the Lord, Israel made a treaty with Gibeon. When the Israelites discovered they had been tricked,

Joshua conscripted the Gibeonites to serve Israel at the tabernacle (chap. 9).

When the king of Jerusalem heard that Gibeon made a treaty with Israel, he formed an alliance with four other kings and together they laid siege on Gibeon. When Joshua received news of the attack, he led his troops to Gibeon and attacked the coalition. The Lord threw the enemy into confusion. As they tried to escape, God sent down large hailstones that killed more of the enemy than Israel did. The Lord stopped the sun in the middle of the sky for almost a full day while Israel completed the rout of their enemies. Then Joshua led his troops south, defeating their enemies as the Lord had commanded them (chap. 10).

Chapters 11–12 describe how Joshua turned his attention northward, destroying the great city of Hazor and enjoying one victory after another over Israel’s enemies. In all, Joshua and his troops vanquished thirty-one kings.



10 The LORD then said to Joshua, “**Stand up!** **A** Why have you fallen facedown?
11 Israel has sinned. **They have violated** **B** my covenant that I appointed for them. They have taken some of what was set apart. They have stolen, **deceived,** **C** and put those things with their own belongings. **12** This is why the Israelites cannot stand against their enemies. They will turn their backs and run from their enemies, because they have been set apart for destruction. **I will no longer be with you** **D** unless you remove from among you what is set apart. **13** Go and consecrate the people. Tell them to consecrate themselves for tomorrow, for this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: There are things that are set apart among you, Israel. You will **not be able to stand** **E** against your enemies until you remove what is set apart. **14** In the morning, present yourselves tribe by tribe. The tribe the LORD selects is to come forward clan by clan. The clan the LORD selects is to come forward family by family. The family the LORD selects is to come forward man by man. **15** The one who is caught with the things set apart must be burned, along with everything he has, because he has violated the LORD’s covenant and committed an outrage in Israel.” **16** Joshua got up early the next morning. He had Israel come forward tribe by tribe, and the tribe of Judah was selected. **17** He had the clans of Judah come forward, and the Zerahite clan was selected. He had the Zerahite clan come forward by heads of families, and Zabdi was selected. **18** He then had Zabdi’s family come forward man by man, and Achan son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was selected. **19** So Joshua said to Achan, “**My son,** **F** give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel, and **make a confession** **G** to him. I urge you, tell me what you have done. Don’t hide anything from me.” **20** Achan replied to Joshua, “It is true. I have sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel. This is what I did: **21** When I saw among the spoils a beautiful cloak from Babylon, five pounds of silver, and a bar of gold weighing a pound and a quarter, I coveted them and took them. You can see for yourself. They are concealed in the ground inside my tent, with the silver under the cloak.” **22** So Joshua sent messengers who ran to the tent, and there was the cloak, concealed in his tent, with the silver underneath. **23** They took the things from inside the tent, brought them to Joshua and all the Israelites, and **spread them out** **H** in the LORD’s presence.

A. Joshua had fallen on his face after the awful defeat at Ai (Josh. 7:1-9). Now, the Lord ordered him to get up and deal with Israel’s sin (v. 11).

B. The Hebrew wording suggests stepping over a boundary. The repeated use of “they” indicates that God held the entire nation guilty.

C. Hiding what he stole proved that Achan willfully disobeyed the Lord.

D. Israel would not experience God’s blessing until the sin was removed from the camp.

E. As the defeat at Ai proved, Israel was helpless before any Canaanite without God fighting for them.

F. Joshua used this term of endearment as he talked with Achan.

G. The Hebrew word relates to praise and thanksgiving (Ps. 26:7; 42:4). God was not glorified by Achan’s sin, but He would receive glory from Achan’s confession.

H. God had laid claim to these items already (Josh. 6:15-19; 7:11). Now, the Israelites returned them to Him.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Covenant Violated

(Josh. 7:10-15)

We should recognize that sin always dishonors God and negatively impacts our relationship with Him.

- **Why is it important for us to recognize sin's impact on us and our relationship with God?**

2. Achan Revealed

(Josh. 7:16-19)

We should acknowledge that God is always aware of our sins.

- **What is repentance?**
- **What might prevent one from confessing and seeking the Lord's forgiveness?**

3. Confession Made

(Josh. 7:20-23)

We honor God by repenting and confessing our sins to Him.

- **Why is it important for us to view sin as seriously as God does?**

Apply the Text

- **How can you encourage one another and even others outside your Bible study group who might be struggling with sin?**
- **How does sin in our lives impact our relationships with others?**

KEY DOCTRINE:

God

God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. (See Isaiah 6:1-5; 1 Peter 1:14-16.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Use a Bible dictionary to learn more about a biblical principle.

Read the article about “Holy War” in a Bible dictionary. Why did the Lord sometimes require the Israelites to dedicate everything in a “ban,” which meant that the inhabitants and possessions of an entire city would be set apart to the Lord and destroyed? How would you respond to someone who questioned why a loving God would order the wholesale extermination of the nations that were occupying the promised land? (*Hints: The Lord had given these people time to repent. See Gen. 15:13-16. The Lord is a God of both love and judgment. See Ex. 34:6-7.*)

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Joshua 7:10

Consider the meaning of God's command to "Stand up!"

After having conquered Jericho, the conquest of Ai appeared to be a small thing in comparison. Like he did at Jericho, Joshua sent spies to scout Ai. When they returned their report was significantly different from that of the spies in Jericho. The spies in Jericho reported that the Lord had handed over the land to them, but these spies did not mention the Lord. They were self-confident, concentrating on their own ability to defeat and conquer Ai with a smaller contingent of just two to three thousand soldiers (compare Num. 26:51). But they were soundly defeated at Ai.

Joshua and the elders fell facedown on the ground before the ark of the Lord. Fear gripped them. Joshua asked the Lord what this would do to His reputation among the nations (Josh 7:9). It seems Joshua had forgotten everything he had seen the Lord do for them.

God's response in verse 10 was a rebuke. He would not listen to any more of Joshua's allegations that God was untrue to His promises to Israel (see v. 7). It is amazing how people are quick to question God's character and wisdom when they reap what they have sown because of their own sin. Instead of lying facedown on the ground feeling sorry for himself and his people, Joshua needed to "stand up" and deal with the problem.

In what area of life is God telling you to "stand up"?



Day 2: Joshua 7:11-12

Underline "this is why" in verse 12.

The Lord got right to the point—"Israel has sinned." They had "stolen" from the Lord and then deceitfully hid what they had stolen "with their own belongings." When Israel was about to defeat Jericho, Joshua instructed that "all the silver and gold, and the articles of bronze and iron were to be set apart for the Lord and must go into the LORD's treasury" (6:19). Joshua also warned them that if they took for themselves anything from the things set apart to the Lord that they and the camp of Israel would be set apart "for destruction" (6:18). This is what happened.

The Lord revealed that it was because of this sin that the people of God could not defeat their enemies. If they were going to act like enemies to God by disregarding Him, then they would experience a taste of what that meant. Therefore, the Lord declared His holiness, the egregiousness of their sin, and its consequences by stating He was going to withdraw His presence from Israel until they removed the sin from among them.

This declaration was both disheartening and hopeful at the same time. While God had abandoned them on the battlefield, there was the hope for restoration once they were purified and their sin was removed. As the people of God, believers are to be holy as the Lord our God is holy (Lev. 11:44).

How does this passage remind you that your choices can bring blessing or harm to others?



Day 3: Joshua 7:13-15

Consider what it meant for the people to “consecrate” themselves.

God told Joshua to go and “consecrate the people” and to “tell them to consecrate themselves for tomorrow.” This meant they needed to prepare themselves for an encounter with God. This may have involved seeking to discover the items that needed to be removed from among them. The next day, the people were to present themselves to the Lord in the order He chose, tribe by tribe, clan by clan, and family by family. God knew who the guilty party was, but this way would emphasize the corporate effect of the sin and the corporate responsibility of Israel for this sin. The lawbreaker thought he could get away with stealing from God. But as he watched what would methodically transpire, it would dawn on him that he was going to be found out. It should remind us that we can be sure our sin will catch up with us (Num. 32:23).

The guilty party had the opportunity to confess his sin when he, along with everyone else, received Joshua’s instructions to prepare for what was to happen the next day. He could have turned dishonoring God to honoring God if only he had demonstrated sincere confession and repentance of his sin. Nonetheless, this guilty party remained silent.

Why do you think God didn’t just tell Joshua who the guilty person was rather than going through the process described in these verses?



Day 4: Joshua 7:16-19

Note the four things Joshua told Achan to do in verse 19.

Joshua “got up early” so there would be no delay in obeying God’s instructions. He was eager to remove the sin against God from among them. Joshua had the tribes of Israel come forward as the Lord instructed. As he did, the Lord selected the tribe of Judah. Next, the Lord selected the Zerahite clan. Then, the Lord selected the family of Zabdi. Finally, Achan was selected. It was essential the people witnessed that it was the Lord who was making the selections, just as He said He would in verses 13-15. He was the one superintending what needed to be done to bring about Israel’s reconciliation to Him.

When Joshua addressed Achan, Joshua spoke to him as a father would to a son who has sinned. Joshua told Achan to do four things. First, he told Achan to “give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel.” Achan would do this by making a confession to the Lord. This is the second command Joshua gave Achan. Third, Joshua implored Achan to tell him what he did. Fourth, Joshua told Achan not to hide anything of what he had done from Joshua.

What prevents you from confessing your sin and seeking God’s forgiveness?



Day 5: Joshua 7:20-23

Compare Joshua 7:21 to Genesis 3:6.

Achan finally confessed his sin. His explanation is similar to what happened in the garden of Eden—he “saw,” he “coveted,” and he “took.” Also reminiscent of the garden is the effect. Adam and Eve’s sin affected the entire human race after them. Achan’s sin affected the entire nation of Israel. Both should remind us that our sin always impacts others. Once Achan confessed, he told Joshua where he had hidden the stolen treasures.

Joshua sent messengers to Achan’s tent, and they found the stolen items exactly where he said he hid them. The messengers retrieved them and spread them out before the Lord, the One to whom they rightfully belonged.

Verses 24-26 indicate Achan and his entire family were stoned to death, and everything he owned along with the stolen items were buried in stones with them. Achan’s household died with him because they implicitly knew about Achan’s sin. Achan had plenty of opportunities to confess but did so only when forced to. His sin had caused the deaths of his brothers (v. 5), and he had disregarded God’s holiness. God allowed Israel to plunder Ai when Ai was finally defeated (8:27). Achan could have enjoyed that plunder if he had only trusted God and waited on God’s timing.

How does Achan’s confession challenge you to be honest before God and others?

APPLY THE TEXT

How does your sin negatively impact your relationship to God? How does knowing that God is always aware of your sin affect how you deal with your sin? How does repenting and confessing your sin honor God?

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SESSION 6

◀ *Unwavering Determination* ▶

JOSHUA 14:1-15

CALEB FOLLOWED THE LORD COMPLETELY AND RECEIVED WHAT
GOD HAD PROMISED HIM DECADES EARLIER.



A lot of us are like the little boy who prayed, “God give me patience, and give it to me right now!” We need to learn to trust God’s promises and at the same time trust His timing. For instance, thousands of years passed from the time God first promised the coming of the Messiah until Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Yet the Bible says God sent His Son at just the right time (Gal. 4:4). We can depend on God to keep His promises—in His perfect timing .

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED ABOUT TRUSTING GOD’S TIMING?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Joshua 1–5 records God’s preparation of Israel for the conquest of Canaan. Chapters 6–12 explain Joshua’s military strategy and record the specific cities, lands, and peoples conquered. Joshua 11:23 states, “Joshua took the entire land, in keeping with all that the LORD had told Moses. Joshua then gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal allotments. After this, the land had rest from war.” The statement, “Joshua took the entire land,” means he defeated all of the enemies he fought and took all of their lands. However, Joshua did not fight everyone, nor did he conquer all of the promised land. Joshua got too old to finish the work he had begun (13:1-7). The Lord promised Joshua that He Himself would drive out the remaining Canaanites. Thus, God instructed Joshua to go ahead and distribute the land to the tribes (chaps. 13–21).

Most allocations of the tribal territories are described using combinations of the listings of towns and geographic features of the land, linking them in order to trace the boundaries. Lists like these were

common in administrative texts in the ancient Near East. Some scholars believe these similarities suggest these records of tribal allotments would have contained the legal force of a treaty. When new towns sprung up in the various territories, they were added to the document throughout Israel’s history. This procedure would update and recognize the existence of new settlements in those tribal areas for as long as Israel possessed them. Consequently, the tribal allotments served as a record of God’s faithfulness to keep the promises He made in His covenant with Israel.

In Joshua 20:1–21:45, Joshua assigned the levitical cities and the cities of refuge. The Levites did not receive a land inheritance. Typically, four cities from each tribe were levitical cities. The priests could live there and be provided fields to pasture and farm. Being spread out among the tribes provided the priests the opportunity to teach the law to the people. The cities of refuge were levitical cities that provided sanctuary for a person who accidentally killed someone (20:2-6).



Joshua 14:1-15

1 The Israelites received these portions that the priest **Eleazar**, **A** Joshua son of Nun, and the **family heads** **B** of the Israelite tribes gave them in the land of Canaan. **2** Their inheritance was **by lot** **C** as the LORD commanded through Moses for the nine and a half tribes, **3** because Moses had given the inheritance to the two and a half tribes **beyond the Jordan**. **D** But he gave no inheritance among them to the Levites. **4** The descendants of Joseph became two tribes, **Manasseh and Ephraim**. **E** No portion of the land was given to the Levites except cities to live in, along with pasturelands for their cattle and livestock. **5** So the Israelites did as the LORD commanded Moses, and they divided the land. **6** The descendants of Judah approached Joshua at Gilgal, and **Caleb** **F** son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, “You know what the LORD promised Moses the man of God at Kadesh-barnea about you and me. **7** I was forty years old when Moses the LORD’s servant sent me from Kadesh-barnea to scout the land, and I brought back an honest report. **8** My brothers who went with me caused the people to lose heart, but I followed the LORD my God **completely**. **G** **9** On that day Moses swore to me, ‘The land where you have set foot will be an inheritance for you and your descendants forever, because you have followed the LORD my God completely.’ **10** As you see, the LORD has **kept me alive** **H** these forty-five years as he promised, since the LORD spoke this word to Moses while Israel was journeying in the wilderness. Here I am today, eighty-five years old. **11** I am still as strong today as I was the day Moses sent me out. My strength for battle and for daily tasks is now as it was then. **12** Now give me this hill country the LORD promised me on that day, because you heard then that the **Anakim** **I** are there, as well as large fortified cities. Perhaps the LORD will be with me and I will drive them out as the LORD promised.” **13** Then Joshua blessed Caleb son of Jephunneh and gave him Hebron as an inheritance. **14** Therefore, Hebron still belongs to Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite as an inheritance today because he followed the LORD, the God of Israel, completely. **15** Hebron’s name used to be Kiriath-arba; Arba was the greatest man among the Anakim. After this, the land had rest from war.

Key Words

A. Aaron’s third son. He became high priest when his father died (Num. 20:22-29; 26:60-61).

B. Leaders from each tribe. Previously, they served under the direction of Moses in the wilderness (Num. 32:28).

C. Casting lots was not a random act. The Israelites trusted the Lord to direct the outcome of the process (Num. 26:52-56; 33:54).

D. The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh received permission to settle on the eastern side of the Jordan River (Num. 32).

E. Jacob had decided that Joseph’s two sons would account for two tribes (Gen. 48).

F. A family head from Judah. Caleb had served as a faithful spy for Moses forty-five years earlier, and God blessed his faithfulness (Num. 13).

G. The Hebrew wording suggests that nothing was lacking or left out.

H. At 85, Caleb was as strong as he had been at 40 (v. 11). He enjoyed health and strength because God promised to bring him into Canaan.

I. A tribe of fierce warriors, likely giants. They had frightened Israel’s earlier generation (Num. 13:22-33), but Caleb was not afraid.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Obedience

(Josh. 14:1-5)

We will face daily opportunities to obey or disobey God's instructions.

- **How was the dividing of the land a demonstration of trust in God and His wisdom?**

2. Devotion

(Josh. 14:6-9)

We can be assured that God knows and rewards those who follow Him wholeheartedly.

- **What does it look like to follow the Lord wholeheartedly?**

3. Inheritance

(Josh. 14:10-15)

We can be assured of God's presence and aid when we follow Him wholeheartedly.

- **What was significant about what Caleb asked of Joshua?**
- **Which of God's promises do you rely upon when facing unknown challenges?**

Apply the Text

- **What are some of the things people face daily that pose an opportunity to obey or disobey God's instructions?**
- **What can people do to prepare themselves for these situations before they face them?**

KEY DOCTRINE:

God

To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience.

(See Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Luke 14:27.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Use a cross reference to learn more about what the Bible says about a particular subject.

The word "inheritance" essentially refers to a "legal transmission of property following death." However, the Hebrew terms translated "inheritance" did not necessarily presuppose a death; they could be used in other ways. Determine how many times "inheritance" or a similar term appears in Joshua 14:1-15. Then read and reflect on these verses to learn more about how it's used in Scripture: Joshua 1:15; 13:33; Jeremiah 10:16; Matthew 19:29; 25:34; and Romans 8:17.

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Joshua 14:1

Compare this verse to Numbers 34:16-29.

Verse 1 introduces the individuals central to the process of distributing the allotments of land to each tribe. Eleazar's name appearing before Joshua's name is not coincidental. Eleazar was Aaron's third son and Aaron's successor as the high priest. He had assisted Moses with a census of the people as they prepared to enter the land of Canaan. He also served Moses as an advisor. When Moses commissioned Joshua to be Moses's successor, Eleazar consulted the Lord before the entire congregation of Israel to demonstrate to Israel that Joshua was God's choice to be Moses's successor (Num. 27:18-23).

Therefore, it is no surprise Eleazar was a key figure on this momentous occasion. He served as a visual reminder that God was faithful to keep the promises of His covenant with Abraham and his descendants. It is for this reason that God had instructed Moses that, when it was time to allocate the land to the tribes, He wanted Joshua, Eleazar, and one leader from each of the tribes to distribute the land to the tribes (Num. 34:16-29). Thus, the information in this verse is important because it highlights God's faithfulness and demonstrates how Joshua and Israel's leaders meticulously obeyed God's instructions.

What are the reminders in your life of God's faithfulness?



Day 2: Joshua 14:2

Compare this verse to Proverbs 16:33.

The lands were allocated to the "nine and a half tribes" still waiting for their tribal inheritance. These were to be determined according to the Lord's instructions first given to Moses and handed down to Joshua. The central role of Eleazar in the distribution of the tribal allotments was not the only indicator that it was the Lord who was central to what was taking place. God had commanded Moses that Israel's tribal allotments were to be determined "by lot" (Num. 26:52-56; 33:54).

Lots were used to determine God's will in a matter. For example, the high priests used the Urim and Thummim as sacred lots to receive a divine answer (Ex. 28:15-30). In the New Testament, the apostles used the lot to replace Judas with Matthias (Acts 1:26). No one is sure what lots looked like or how people knew how to interpret them. What is most important is that Scripture indicates the outcome of the lot was not random. Proverbs 16:33 states, "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD." Therefore, the determining of each tribe's allotment was not a matter of chance; God was in control of the procedure and outcomes.

How does this passage remind you that nothing happens randomly—that God is ultimately in control of all the details of your life?



Day 3: Joshua 14:3-5

Highlight the phrase “So the Israelites did as the LORD commanded.”

Jacob had twelve sons. From oldest to youngest they were Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin. Joseph received a double inheritance from his father, so Joseph’s sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, became the heads of two tribes. That totals thirteen. However, the tribe of Levi did not receive an inheritance of land. Because the Levites were commissioned to serve the Lord at the tabernacle and then later at the temple, their inheritance was “the LORD . . . just as he promised them” (Deut. 18:1-2; Josh. 13:33). Joshua 21:1-41 indicates forty-eight cities distributed throughout the twelve tribal allotments were designated for the Levites.

At their request, Moses had already promised land allotments east of the Jordan River to “two and a half tribes” on the condition they joined the other tribes in the conquest of the land west of the Jordan (Num. 32:28-33). These were the tribes of Gad, Reuben, and half of the tribe of Manasseh. Joshua reconfirmed this promise with them when the conquest was about to commence (Josh. 1:12-18).

Verse 5 says that all “the Israelites did as the LORD commanded Moses”—in contrast to the previous generation with the exceptions of Joshua and Caleb. None of God’s commands are trivial. It was because of the people’s obedience that the Israelites enjoyed the blessing of dividing the land.

What blessings are you missing because of disobedience?



Day 4: Joshua 14:6-9

Underline “followed the LORD my God completely.”

Caleb, a descendant of Judah, approached Joshua and reminded him of Moses’s promise at Kadesh-barnea. After the Israelites left Mount Sinai and were readying themselves to go into the promised land, they settled at Kadesh-barnea, an oasis south of Canaan. Then Moses sent twelve spies, one from each tribe, to scout out the land so that they would know what to expect when they entered it. Caleb was one of the two spies who said Israel could defeat the inhabitants because the Lord would give them the victory; the other was Joshua. Nevertheless, the people believed the report of the ten spies instead of Joshua and Caleb (Num. 13-14).

Numbers 32:12 says that none except Caleb and Joshua followed the Lord completely. “Completely” means “wholeheartedly.” Here, Caleb repeated the phrase that he “followed the LORD . . . completely” with the same wording in Hebrew. It was because of their unwavering faith and devotion to God that Joshua and Caleb, along with their families, were the only ones God permitted to enter the promised land from that generation. In Numbers 14:24, God promised He would bring Caleb into the promised land and that his descendants would receive their inheritance there because Caleb “had a different spirit” and “remained loyal to me.”

What would it look like in your life to follow the Lord wholeheartedly?



Day 5: Joshua 14:10-15

Compare Joshua 14:10 to Numbers 14:30.

Caleb was eager to receive the inheritance God had promise him and his family. But he was forced to wait “forty-five years” before he could receive it while he wandered for forty of those years in the wilderness—not because of any wrong he had done but because of the lack of faith and the disobedience of others. The remaining five years indicate that the Israelites had already been involved in the conquest of Canaan for at least five years.

Caleb’s trust in the Lord’s faithfulness never wavered. He realized that God had kept him alive for this. Not only did the Lord keep Caleb alive at eighty-five years old, but He also kept Caleb as strong as he was forty-five years prior when Moses sent him out to scout the land of Canaan. Caleb was not too old or too weak to do what God had promised him he could do. Moreover, Caleb was eager to go to the hill country, the location of the fortified cities of the Anakim, and to take on the same giants that had terrified the other ten spies. Joshua 11:21-22 indicates Israel had already defeated the Anakim, but some had gotten away only to return later. Caleb was ready and eager to go in and finish them off. After hearing Caleb’s request, “Joshua blessed Caleb” and gave him the land he requested as his inheritance.

How does this passage remind you that God’s promises are certain, even if their fulfillment takes time?

In what areas of your life do you need to demonstrate the same confidence in God’s Word that Caleb showed?

APPLY THE TEXT

Is there any situation in your life at the present where you are faced with a decision to obey or disobey God’s instructions? What should you remember and do to make the right decision and obey God?

JOURNAL



SESSION 7

Vital Decision

JOSHUA 24:14-24

IN HIS FAREWELL ADDRESS, JOSHUA CHALLENGED THE PEOPLE
TO CHOOSE THE LORD OVER THE GODS OF THE CANAANITES.



Crash landings of commercial jets are extremely rare. Nevertheless, one of the normal routines before a commercial jet takes off is flight attendants giving passengers instructions on what to do in case of an emergency landing on land or water. Most passengers seem to ignore the flight attendants. People might get away with that on a plane, but it is always costly when people ignore warnings in the Word of God.

WHY ARE PEOPLE TEMPTED TO IGNORE WARNINGS OF POTENTIAL DANGER?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Chapters 22–24 contain Joshua’s farewell message to Israel. This last section can be divided into two subsections. Chapter 22 describes how Joshua summoned the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh that had requested to have their tribal allotments in lands east of the Jordan River. Moses had promised them these allotments if they helped the rest of the tribes defeat the Canaanites (Num. 32:1-32; Josh. 1:12-18). Now that the fighting was done, Joshua commended them for keeping their oath. Before pronouncing a blessing on them and sending them to their homes, Joshua instructed them to obey God’s Word and to remain His faithful servants.

When the Reubenites, Gadites, and half-tribe of Manasseh reached the Jordan River, they built a large altar on the western side, Israel’s side. The other tribes, thinking that this action would bring God’s wrath on all of Israel as they had experienced in the past, prepared to wage war with them. However, before commencing their attack, the nine and a half tribes west of the Jordan sent a delegation to speak with the two and

a half tribes to the east. The eastern tribes appealed to God and said they built the altar as a memorial of their solidarity with the other tribes even though they were separated by the Jordan River. This pleased the delegation and averted hostilities.

Chapters 23–24 contain Joshua’s last words to Israel. He challenged the people to remain faithful to the Lord and stay away from the false gods of the peoples still remaining in the land. Joshua warned them that if they worshiped these idols, then the Lord would destroy them. The people insisted they would remain faithful. Consequently, Joshua made a covenant for the people and set up a memorial stone as a witness to the oath they made to the Lord. Israel worshiped God as long as Joshua and their elders who served beside Joshua lived. Finally, the book concludes with the burials of Joshua, Joseph’s bones, and Eleazar the high priest.



14 “Therefore, **fear**^A the LORD and worship him in **sincerity and truth**. **B** Get rid of the gods your ancestors worshiped **beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt**, **C** and worship the LORD. **15** But if it doesn’t please you to worship the LORD, **choose for yourselves**^D today: Which will you worship—the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River or the **gods of the Amorites**^E in whose land you are living? As for me and my family, **we will worship the LORD.**” **F** **16** The people replied, “We will certainly not abandon the LORD to worship other gods! **17** For the LORD our God brought us and our ancestors out of the land of Egypt, out of the place of slavery, and performed these great signs before our eyes. He also protected us all along the way we went and among all the peoples whose lands we traveled through. **18** The LORD drove out before us all the peoples, including the Amorites who lived in the land. We too will worship the LORD, because he is our God.” **19** But Joshua told the people, “You will not be able to worship the LORD, because he is a holy God. He is a **jealous**^G God; he will not forgive your transgressions and sins. **20** If you abandon the LORD and worship foreign gods, he will **turn against you**, **H** harm you, and completely destroy you, after he has been good to you.” **21** “No!” the people answered Joshua. “We will worship the LORD.” **22** Joshua then told the people, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you yourselves have chosen to worship the LORD.” “We are witnesses,” they said. **23** “Then get rid of the foreign gods that are among you and turn your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel.” **24** So the people said to Joshua, “We will worship the LORD our God and obey him.”

A. Joshua was calling for Israel to show reverence and respect for the Lord.

B. The Israelites needed to live with integrity before the Lord. Superficial devotion—or lip service—would not be sufficient.

C. Abraham lived in a pagan society before God called him to Canaan (Gen. 11:27-28). Israel’s previous generation apparently struggled with Egyptian idolatry even after God rescued them from slavery.

D. God had chosen Israel, and He longed for them to choose Him. However, He would not force them to worship Him.

E. Under Moses, Israel defeated the Amorites (Num. 21:21-35). Yet, the Israelites continued to worship Amorite idols throughout their history (1 Kings 21:26; 2 Kings 21:11).

F. Joshua declared his choice. The Hebrew word for “worship” also can be translated “serve.” Worship and service are like two sides of the same coin.

G. God would not stand for idolatry. He demanded the Israelites’ full commitment (see Ex. 20:5; Deut. 32:16-21; Nah. 1:2; and Zech. 8:2).

H. God’s favor depended on Israel’s faithfulness. If they refused to serve Him alone, they would suffer curses instead of blessings.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Challenge

(Josh. 24:14-18)

Each person must consider how he or she will respond to the Lord.

- **Why is it important to consciously choose whom you will serve?**
- **How does your decision to serve the Lord influence people around you?**

2. Warning

(Josh. 24:19-24)

We're to put away any idols that might demand our devotion that rightfully belongs to the Lord.

- **What kinds of idols or false ideas compete for your time and attention?**

Apply the Text

As a group, discuss ways you might encourage one another to respond rightly to the Lord when He challenges you to be wholeheartedly devoted to Him.

- **What does it look like in your context to be wholeheartedly devoted to the Lord?**

KEY DOCTRINE:

God's Purpose of Grace

Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. (See John 5:24; 10:27-29.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Use a Bible study resource to learn more about a biblical principle.

Joshua 24 highlights a renewal of the covenant between the Lord and His people. Use a Bible atlas to locate Shechem on a map of ancient Israel. Look up the word "covenant" in a Bible dictionary. Read and reflect on the following Scripture passages to learn more about ancient covenants: Genesis 9:8-17; 12:1-3; 15:1-21; 17:1-27; Exodus 19:1-8; 2 Samuel 7:1-17. Consider how the Israelites responded to God's covenants through the years. Why was a new covenant sealed by Jesus's death and resurrection necessary for God's people?



Explore the Bible Prayer Guide

Scan here for a weekly prayer guide based on this quarter's Bible passages.



DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Joshua 24:14

Reflect on what it means to worship God in sincerity and truth.

Verses 1-13 record that Joshua gathered Israel at Shechem. It was at Shechem that God promised Abraham He would give the land of Canaan to his descendants. So as Joshua was about to die, he stood before all of Israel at Shechem and proclaimed that they themselves were evidence of and witnesses to the truth that God kept His promise to Abraham.

Joshua told how God had provided for His people. He reminded them how the Lord brought Abraham to the land of Canaan and multiplied his descendants. God had been with them in Egypt. He destroyed their enemies and brought the Israelites out of Egypt. After spending time in the wilderness, God brought them into the promised land. Even though the inhabitants of the land fought against Israel, the Lord handed Israel's enemies over to them and gave them the land. God had given them every good thing they now possessed.

Based on these truths, Joshua brought this challenge to the nation: “fear the LORD and worship him in sincerity and truth.” This means they were to have a deep-seated reverence and awe for God that would cause them to hate evil and reject all other gods including the gods that their ancestors worshiped “beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt.” This meant desiring to honor and worship Him above everything else.

What does it mean to “serve the LORD in sincerity and truth” in your daily life?



Day 2: Joshua 24:15

Reflect on why it was necessary for the Israelites to choose whom they would worship.

Joshua challenged the people to choose whom they would worship. They could not wallow in indecision. Indecision is a decision that leads to more wrong decisions. Israel had a poor track record when it came to faithfulness. Their forefathers worshiped other gods in Mesopotamia and Egypt, and now the Israelites were in a land where its populace worshiped more false gods. The gods of the Canaanites' seductive fertility cult would tempt the Israelites with its materialism and immorality.

Either the Israelites would worship the Lord alone and reject all other gods, or they would worship other gods and in so doing reject the Lord. They could not do both, although going forward many of them would try and pay a price for having done so. The Lord requires undivided devotion. Joshua's challenge was that it was now time for all the people of Israel to declare their loyalty to the Lord. Commitment to the Lord is either total commitment or it is not commitment at all.

Joshua demonstrated godly leadership by displaying before the people his own example. He stood before the entire nation and declared that he and his family were going to “worship the LORD.” Joshua's decision did not depend on what those around him would or would not do.

How does making a deliberate choice to serve God affect your decisions and actions?



Day 3: Joshua 24:16-18

Note the reasons the people cited for clinging to the Lord.

We should never underestimate the influence a godly example can have on others. Joshua provides an example of how a man devoted to the Lord had a positive influence on a multitude of others. When Joshua had addressed the people earlier, he instructed them to literally “cling” to the Lord their God because of what the Lord had done for them (23:8-9). Now, with the most emphatic language possible, the people replied to Joshua, exclaiming that there was no way they would “abandon the LORD to worship other gods.” They promised to do what Joshua had challenged them to do, to cling to the Lord. This means they were promising they would stay away from the influence of pagan gods, obey the Lord, cultivate love for and devotion to Him, and worship Him alone. This is the commitment of everyone who truly loves the Lord.

Joshua had recounted the good things the Lord had done for Israel in verses 1-13. Beginning in verse 17, the people recounted God’s history of blessing them as well. By doing so, they were indicating that they realized they had good reason to cling to the Lord and reject all other gods. They recounted how God saved them out of Egypt, protected them from their enemies as they made their way through the wilderness, and defeated and “drove out before” them all of the Amorites they had faced in the land of Canaan.

Make a list of reasons to cling to the Lord.



Day 4: Joshua 24:19-20

Circle the words “holy” and “jealous.”

Joshua’s response to the people in verse 19 may appear harsh. However, he had witnessed their parents give a similar response of commitment to the Lord at Sinai. It was not long after they declared their loyalty to the Lord that they made a golden calf and worshiped it (Ex. 19:8; 32:1-4). Joshua knew that it was easier to make a promise of devotion to the Lord than it was to keep it. He knew that after all the good things God had done for Israel up to that point, they would be unfaithful to Him.

The statement, “he will not forgive your transgressions and sins,” was not an absolute, eternal statement for the Lord’s covenant people. The remainder of the Scriptures demonstrates this (see Rom. 11:11-24; Eph. 2:11-22). Nevertheless, it did mean that God would not overlook their unfaithfulness and there would be consequences for their sin. The law warned that if the Israelites were unfaithful to the Lord, then they would experience drought, famine, disease, defeat, and ultimately exile from the promised land (Deut. 28:15-68).

God is not to be taken lightly. Believers today need to recognize that while we are secure in Christ, there is great blessing when we obey our Lord but loss of blessing when we sin against Him (1 Cor. 3:13-14; Gal. 6:7-9).

How does God’s holiness shape the way you approach Him in worship and obedience?



Day 5: Joshua 24:21-24

Note the two commands in verse 23.

After hearing Joshua say they would break their covenant with the Lord by worshipping other gods, the people of Israel doubled down. They emphatically denied the possibility they would reject the Lord and serve other gods, insisting that they would be faithful servants who would “worship the LORD” just as they had declared already. With that said, Joshua commenced to put them under oath. He made the people responsible to be witnesses against themselves that they had “chosen to worship the LORD.” Having a witness or witnesses was part of the ceremony of making an ancient covenant. Verses 26-27 indicate Joshua recorded their covenant and erected a stone to memorialize it to serve as a visual witness to the promise they made that day.

Verse 23 reveals that what God had previously predicted had already begun. Some of the Israelites had possession of idols and were worshipping these “foreign gods”—even after all the things they had seen the Lord do and after everything He had given them. Notwithstanding, one more time they emphatically insisted, “We will worship the LORD our God and obey him.” In the final comments of the book, verse 31 indicates Israel worshiped the Lord throughout the lifetime of Joshua and the elders of his generation who had witnessed all that the Lord had done for Israel.

What areas of your life need realignment to reflect your commitment to worship and obey God fully?

APPLY THE TEXT

What are some of the consequences for failing to put away idols in your life? Who might you influence this week to encourage to strengthen their devotion to the Lord?

JOURNAL



SESSION 8

Consequences

JUDGES 2:11-23

AFTER JOSHUA'S DEATH, ISRAEL FELL INTO A CYCLE OF
SIN, JUDGMENT, CONFESSION, AND RESTORATION.



Intending to do well doesn't always result in something being well done. We recognize this to be true regarding the people of Israel when Joshua died and the era of the judges began. Before Joshua's death, the Israelites insisted they would be faithful to the Lord and never worship the gods of the Canaanites. However, as soon as Joshua and the elders who served alongside of him died, Israel broke their promise and suffered the consequences of their infidelity to the Lord.

*WHAT FACTORS MIGHT CAUSE PEOPLE TO BREAK THEIR COMMITMENTS,
AND HOW CAN WE GUARD AGAINST THIS IN OUR OWN LIVES?*

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

In Joshua 13:1, God said to Joshua, "You have become old, advanced in age, but a great deal of the land remains to be possessed." Then in verses 2-6, the Lord listed all the lands in Canaan that were yet to be possessed by the Israelites. Next, God promised that since Joshua could not do it, He Himself would drive out Israel's enemies, but in the meantime Joshua should go ahead and distribute the tribal allotments of the land to Israel as their inheritance. Therefore, Joshua 13:1-6 indicates that even though the Lord had given all of the promised land to the Israelites when Joshua died, there were still areas in their tribal allotments where they needed to go in, drive out their inhabitants, and possess them. It is essential to recognize this as we begin a study of the book of Judges.

As the book begins, it looked as if all would go well for the tribes as they set out to possess the unconquered areas. The tribe of Judah took the lead with a measure of success at first but were unable to drive out the Canaanites in the lowlands (Judg. 1:2-19). After that, with the exception of a couple

of bright spots, the continuing narrative is one of failure and compromise. The Israelites were not supposed to make agreements with the Canaanites and coexist with them, but they did. Because of their sins, the angel of the Lord confronted Israel with a declaration of judgment. He declared that God would no longer drive out the Canaanites but instead would allow them to remain in the land to be thorns in Israel's sides (2:1-3).

As soon as Joshua and the elders who served with him died, a new "generation rose up who did not know the LORD or the works He had done for Israel" (2:10). This generation abandoned the Lord and began worshipping the gods of the surrounding peoples in Canaan. Instead of ridding the land of the Canaanites, Israel became like the Canaanites. As a result, whenever the Israelites went out to war, the Lord was against them and caused them to be defeated (2:15).



Judges 2:11-23

11 The Israelites did what was **evil**^A in the LORD's sight. They worshiped the Baals **12** and abandoned the LORD, the God of their ancestors, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed other gods from the surrounding peoples and bowed down to them. They angered the LORD, **13** for they abandoned him and worshiped **Baal and the Ashtoreths**. **B 14** The LORD's anger **burned**^C against Israel, and he handed them over to **marauders**^D who raided them. He sold them to the enemies around them, and they could no longer resist their enemies. **15** Whenever the Israelites went out, the LORD was against them and brought disaster on them, just as he had promised and sworn to them. So they suffered greatly. **16** The LORD raised up judges, who saved them from the power of their marauders, **17** but they did not listen to their judges. Instead, they **prostituted**^E themselves with other gods, bowing down to them. They quickly turned from the way of their ancestors, who had walked in obedience to the LORD's commands. They did not do as their ancestors did. **18** Whenever the LORD raised up a judge for the Israelites, the LORD was with him and saved the people from the power of their enemies while the judge was still alive. The LORD was moved to **pity**^F whenever they groaned because of those who were oppressing and afflicting them. **19** Whenever the judge died, the Israelites would act **even more corruptly**^G than their ancestors, following other gods to serve them and bow in worship to them. They did not turn from their evil practices or their obstinate ways. **20** The LORD's anger burned against Israel, and he declared, "Because this nation has violated **my covenant**^H that I made with their ancestors and disobeyed me, **21** I will no longer drive out before them any of the nations Joshua left when he died. **22** I did this to **test**^I Israel and to see whether or not they would keep the LORD's way by walking in it, as their ancestors had." **23** The LORD left these nations and did not drive them out immediately. He did not hand them over to Joshua.

Key Words

A. The Hebrew word indicates moral bankruptcy and spiritual sickness.

B. Baal was the primary god of the Canaanites and ruled the weather and crops. Ashtoreth was his female consort and ruled war and fertility.

C. The wording suggests a blazing anger (see also Ex. 32:10). The Lord told the Israelites that He was a jealous God (Ex. 20:5) and would not tolerate idolatry.

D. Enemies had their way with Israel since God no longer protected the nation (vv. 15,21).

E. God viewed Israel's spiritual infidelity like an unfaithful spouse (2 Sam. 22:7; Job 20:22; Hos. 5:15). Pursuing other gods was like pursuing a harlot.

F. The wording describes deep emotion that longs to comfort someone. For God, the Israelites' suffering moved Him to compassionate action.

G. Conveys behavior that leads to ruin. Each generation drew closer to destruction than the one before.

H. The Sinai covenant was the key to Israel's prosperity or oppression in the promised land (see Deut. 28-30).

I. The Israelites' decisions regarding idol worship would test their faithfulness to God.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. The Evil

(Judg. 2:11-15)

God's people must guard against the danger of forgetting what the Lord has done for them.

- **What factors contribute to a person or a group abandoning God?**

2. The Cycle

(Judg. 2:16-19)

Believers can be assured that God's faithfulness to act on behalf of His people is rooted in His character, not in ours.

- **What does God's providing a deliverer tell us about God's character?**

3. The Declaration

(Judg. 2:20-23)

Believers can expect their obedience to God to be tested.

- **Why is disobedience—sin—such a big deal to God? How can sin spiral us away from God today?**
- **When and how has God tested you? How is your faith stronger as a result?**

Apply the Text

- **Why is it essential that you always remember that God's faithfulness to act on behalf of His people is rooted in His character, not in ours? What will result if you doubt or forget this truth?**

KEY DOCTRINE: Salvation

Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. (See Luke 3:8; Romans 2:4-5.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Learn more about a person in the Bible.

The "angel of the LORD" appears in Judges 2:1, the first of four times in the book of Judges (see also 5:23; 6:11; and 13:1-24). Many scholars believe this was a "christophany," an appearance of Jesus prior to His incarnation in the Gospels. Read and reflect on other possible christophanies in the Old Testament, such as Genesis 32:24-30 and Daniel 3:24-25. Why do you think Jesus appeared in situations like these? How does the presence of Jesus affect your life each day?

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Judges 2:11-13

Identify the “evil” thing the Israelites did.

Verse 11 says literally, “The sons of Israel did the evil thing in the sight of the LORD.” What was “the evil thing” Israel did? Using the word “the” means it was not just any evil thing they did. It was the most egregious thing they could do. They “worshiped the Baals and abandoned the LORD, the God of their ancestors.” Baal literally means “lord, master, owner, possessor, or husband.” As a proper noun, it referred to the supreme god of the fertility cult of the Canaanites. He was the storm god whose worshipers believed gave his rain to the earth so that it could bear fruit. Ashtoreth was the Canaanite goddess of fertility, love, and war. The fertility of the land depended on the sexual activities of Baal and his consort. Therefore, the false religion of the Canaanites promised its adherents material prosperity while incorporating flagrant sexual immorality into its manipulative practices. The worship of Baal and Ash-toreth became a tremendous temptation to Israel up to the time of the Babylonian exile. Instead of being a witness to the nations by living in such a way that pointed them to the one and only true God, Israel “abandoned the LORD.”

Just because the people of God took their eyes off the Lord does not mean He took His eyes off them. The Lord saw their sin, and they were going to give an account for this evil thing they had done.

What does this passage reveal about our tendency to forget God’s faithfulness?



Day 2: Judges 2:14-15

Compare these verses to Joshua 24:16-20.

The Israelites broke the promise of commitment they had declared at Shechem (Josh. 24:14-24). While verses 13-15 describe what the Israelites did, verses 14-15 describe what the Lord did in response. “The LORD’s anger burned against Israel.” They would experience the consequences of their infidelity. Though they are not identified here, the Lord raised up marauders to attack and plunder Israel. Without the Lord’s help, Israel was defenseless against their enemies. They would be helpless without His protection.

What’s more, whenever Israel went out to fight against their attackers, “the LORD was against them and brought disaster on them.” The enemies who raided them were His pawns. The events described here echo the warning God gave to Israel through Moses in Deuteronomy 31:16-21. The Lord warned Israel that if they “prostitute themselves with the foreign gods of the land,” despising Him and breaking His covenant, that His anger would “burn against them on that day,” that “they will become easy prey,” and “many troubles and afflictions will come to them.” The Israelites ignored God’s numerous warnings through both Moses and Joshua. Consequently, “they suffered greatly.” Their abandonment of the Lord brought about the dire consequences of which they had been warned. God is always faithful to keep all His promises.

What factors contribute to a person or group abandoning God?



Day 3: Judges 2:16-17

Notice how God showed grace to His sinful people.

While the Lord was against the Israelites (v. 14), He was actually for them. In a situation that appeared hopeless, there was grace and hope. “The LORD raised up judges, who saved them.” The judges functioned as military deliverers who saved their people from their enemies. With that said, the true Savior of Israel was the Lord Himself who raised up and empowered these leaders to deliver their people. The emphasis is on God’s compassion for His people as they suffered from His discipline and on His power to raise up deliverers who saved them from those who attacked and plundered them.

One would think that when the Israelites witnessed God raise up judges to save them, they would have realized the only way to be protected and to flourish would be to repent. Instead, the Israelites “prostituted themselves with other gods.” This statement appears to allude to the lewd activities of the Canaanite fertility cult that involved cultic prostitution in an attempt to manipulate their gods. “Bowing down to them,” the Israelites demonstrated their reverence and submission to these false gods instead of to their faithful God who took them from nothing and made them a nation. It is amazing how quickly they turned back to the false gods.

How do you respond when God sends guidance or correction into your life?

Are there areas where you resist Him because of your own desires?



Day 4: Judges 2:18-19

Take note of the repeated cycles in the book of Judges.

The people “groaned because of those who were oppressing and afflicting them,” and they “cried out to the LORD” (see Judg. 3:9). However, there is no indication the Israelites ever repented of their sins against God. It seems they cried out because of their affliction, not because of conviction of their sin. Nevertheless, the Lord raised judges to save the Israelites because of His compassion; He “was moved to pity.” Even though they were unfaithful to Him and His anger burned against them, the Lord would not turn His back on His people whom He loved. The impotent false gods and idols the Israelites bowed down to were powerless to respond in such a way.

When a judge died the people obstinately continued their downward spiral into deeper corruption than the previous generation. The book of Judges describes repeated cycles of (1) the abandonment of the Lord and the worship of the Canaanite gods, (2) the anger of the Lord with the Israelites and His raising up enemies to oppress them, (3) Israel’s groanings and cries to God, (4) the Lord’s compassion on His people as He raised up judges to deliver them, (5) a period of peace for the Israelites as long as the judge lived, and (6) the Israelites stubbornly acting more corruptly than the previous generation as they returned to the Canaanite gods.

What does God’s providing a deliverer tell us about His character?



Day 5: Judges 2:20-23

Consider what these verses reveal about the consequences of sin.

By repeating verse 14, verse 20 emphasizes how angry God was with Israel. Next, the Lord referred to Israel as “this nation.” This expression indicates a sense of alienation and speaks to Israel’s infidelity to God as Israel violated the covenant the Lord made with their forefathers. Consequently, the Lord emphatically declared He would no longer give the Israelites the ability to drive out the Canaanites who still lived in areas of Israel’s tribal allotments that were yet to be possessed. So even when the Israelites had some success in battle during the time of the judges, it did not result in the possession of more land.

The Lord made clear His intention in allowing the Canaanites to remain. It was to test the Israelites. Would they turn back to God and walk in His ways like their forefathers, or would they continue in their rebellion against Him? The writer then states the Lord did as He declared. The Lord did not give Joshua victory over the remaining Canaanites in the land. Israel’s unfaithfulness to the Lord resulted in the loss of His blessing.

When and how has God tested you?

How is your faith stronger as a result?

APPLY THE TEXT

What “cycles” do you see in your own spiritual life—obedience, complacency, failure, repentance? How can recognizing these patterns help you break free from them? What practical habits can prevent spiritual drift?

JOURNAL



SESSION 9

Called

JUDGES 6:1-4,7-16

THOUGH GIDEON CONSIDERED HIMSELF INADEQUATE, GOD CALLED HIM
TO DELIVER HIS PEOPLE FROM THE MIDIANITES.



We often compare ourselves to others. This rarely has a positive result. It either leads to pride because we think we are better than others, or it leads to discouragement because we believe others are better than us. It is especially confounding when God calls a person to serve Him in some capacity when someone else seems better fit to do it. God does this so that when the task is accomplished, God will receive the glory for it. Such was the case with Gideon.

*WHEN HAVE YOU FELT INADEQUATE FOR A TASK?
WHERE DID YOU TURN FOR HELP?*

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Chapter 3 introduces readers to the first three judges of Israel. The judges were men and women God raised up to deliver the Israelites from foreign oppressors and to establish order during their lifetimes. Verse 8 indicates a powerful Aramean king subjugated the Israelites for eight years. But the Lord raised Othniel, Caleb's nephew and son-in-law to defeat him. Israel enjoyed peace for forty years until Othniel's death.

When Othniel died, Israel rebelled against the Lord again. So the Lord gave Eglon, king of Moab, power to form a coalition with Ammon and Amalek and attack Israel, resulting in his possession of Jericho. Eglon's dominance over Israel lasted for eighteen years, until the Lord raised up Ehud of Benjamin who assassinated Eglon. Ehud led Israel in battle to defeat the Moabites. After that, Israel had peace for eighty years. Following Ehud, Shamgar became a judge and delivered Israel by striking down six hundred Philistines with a cattle prod.

Chapter 4 recounts how Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord again, and that the

Lord handed Israel over to the Canaanite King Jabin of Hazor. Then the Lord raised Deborah as the judge to save His people. Barak, a military leader in Israel, called upon Deborah to go with him to defeat the Canaanites. When the Canaanite commander, Sisera, tried to hide from the Israelites, a woman named Jael killed him while he slept. Then the land had peace for forty years. Chapter 5 records the song Deborah and Barak sang praising the Lord for saving Israel.

Judges 6 indicates the Israelites abandoned the Lord again, so the Lord raised up the Midianites, accompanied by the Amalekites and the Qedemites, who oppressed Israel for seven years. As a result, the Israelites were impoverished and cried out to the Lord. The Lord sent a prophet to remind them of how He had saved them out of Egypt, gave them the land of Canaan, and how they responded to Him with disobedience. After that, the Lord called Gideon to be the next judge to deliver Israel from their oppressors. Gideon's account is the largest section in the book of Judges.



Judges 6:1-4,7-16

1 The Israelites did **what was evil** **A** in the sight of the LORD. So the Lord handed them over to Midian seven years, **2** and they **oppressed** **B** Israel. Because of Midian, the Israelites made **hiding places** **C** for themselves in the mountains, caves, and strongholds. **3** Whenever the Israelites planted crops, the Midianites, Amalekites, and the **people of the east** **D** came and attacked them. **4** They encamped against them and destroyed the produce of the land, even as far as Gaza. They left nothing for Israel to eat, as well as no sheep, ox, or donkey. [. . .] **7** When the Israelites **cried out** **E** to him because of Midian, **8** the LORD sent a **prophet** **F** to them. He said to them, “This is what the LORD God of Israel says: ‘I brought you out of Egypt and out of the place of slavery. **9** I rescued you from the power of Egypt and the power of all who oppressed you. I drove them out before you and gave you their land. **10** I said to you: I am the LORD your God. Do not fear the gods of the Amorites whose land you live in. But you did not obey me.’” **11** The **angel of the LORD** **G** came, and he sat under the oak that was in Ophrah, which belonged to Joash, the Abiezrite. His son Gideon was threshing wheat in the winepress in order to hide it from the Midianites. **12** Then the angel of the LORD appeared to him and said, “The LORD is with you, valiant warrior.” **13** Gideon said to him, “Please, my lord, if the LORD is with us, why has all this happened? And where are all his wonders that our ancestors told us about? They said, ‘Hasn’t the LORD brought us out of Egypt?’ But now **the LORD has abandoned us** **H** and handed us over to Midian.” **14** The LORD turned to him and said, “Go in the strength you have and deliver Israel from the grasp of Midian. I am sending you!” **15** He said to him, “Please, Lord, how can I deliver Israel? Look, my family is the weakest in Manasseh, and **I am the youngest** **I** in my father’s family.” **16** “But I will be with you,” the LORD said to him. “You will strike Midian down as if it were one man.”

Key Words

A. Several judges had already served across Israel (Judg. 3–4). Yet the nation generally continued to embrace idolatry and the cycle of sin.

B. Israel’s suffering mirrors what Moses described in Deuteronomy 28:15-57.

C. The Israelites’ deprivation was matched only by their fear. The Midianites forced them out of their homes and into the hills for shelter.

D. The Amalekites and the Midianites joined forces with nomadic tribes from the Arabian desert to steal or destroy everything Israel had.

E. After suffering seven years of terror and deprivation (v. 1), Israel finally turned to God.

F. Before God sent a judge to deliver them, He sent a prophet. Prophets were empowered to share the Lord’s message. This was another message of chastisement for ignoring God.

G. A special messenger from God. Some believe this was a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus.

H. Gideon blamed God for Israel’s troubles. His sentiments likely reflected many in Israel.

I. Like Moses (Ex. 3–4), Gideon had plenty of excuses for not leading God’s people. But the Lord assured him that he would not fight alone (v. 16).

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Oppression

(Judg. 6:1-4,7-10)

We can anticipate that when people turn their backs on God, they will experience undesirable consequences.

- **Do you think God's judgment through the Midianites was too harsh? Why or why not?**
- **What outcomes should we anticipate if we live in disobedience to God?**

2. Commission

(Judg. 6:11-14)

We can be encouraged to know that God calls unlikely people to do great things for Him.

- **How have you typically responded to God's call in your life?**
- **How might our circumstances impact our response to God's calling?**

3. Reassurance

(Judg. 6:12-16)

Believers should trust God when being called upon to take a specific action for Him.

- **How does the assurance of God's presence negate our excuse of inadequacy?**

Apply the Text

As a group, discuss how you might encourage one another to do great things for God.

- **How can believers be encouraged by the truth that God calls unlikely people to do great things for Him?**

KEY DOCTRINE: God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service. (See Judges 14:6; Acts 1:8.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Do a word study to gain a better understanding of a passage.

Scripture is full of “calling” experiences where God selected servants to carry out kingdom work. Study the following passages: Genesis 12:1-4; Exodus 3-4; 1 Kings 19:19-21; Isaiah 6:1-9; Jeremiah 1; Jonah 1; Luke 1:26-38; Mark 1:16-20; and Acts 9:1-9. Identify similarities and differences. Note the particular ways each person was called and how they responded. Examine your own calling from God. Have you experienced a specific call from Him? How have you responded?

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Judges 6:1-4

Summarize what life was like for the Israelites under Midianite oppression.

As before, the fickle Israelites “did what was evil in the sight of the LORD” (see 4:1). And as before, the Lord handed them over to their enemies. This time it was the Midianites for seven years. Like swarming locusts, the Midianites often made decimating, swift strikes on their enemies using camels over long distances. They would leave little of value behind them and get away before any counterstrike could be made. For seven years, the Israelites existed in constant fear as they resorted to living in the mountains, caves, and strongholds because of the terrifying lightning strikes of the Midianites that could happen at any moment.

These hordes of invaders timed their raids to coincide with the time Israel’s crops were ready to harvest. The marauders were like a great swarm of locusts, plundering everything they could and laying waste to everything else. They took all of Israel’s food and means of producing more food by leaving them with “no sheep, ox, or donkey.” Israel’s economic base and its means for sustenance were eliminated.

Verse 6 states that “Israel became poverty-stricken because of Midian, and the Israelites cried out to the LORD.” Even then, their cry was a plea for help without any hint of repentance.

What patterns or choices in Israel’s life led them into oppression? Are there any similar patterns in your life today?



Day 2: Judges 6:7-9

Reflect on why God sent a prophet before He sent a deliverer.

When the Israelites cried out to the Lord because of the oppression of the Midianites, the Lord graciously “sent a prophet to them.” God’s sending of the prophet highlights His responsiveness to the plight of His people. While the prophet’s name was unimportant, the message was of utmost importance because he came bearing a message from God to His covenant people.

There are two parts to the Lord God’s message to Israel. Repeatedly, the Israelites appear to have had poor memories when it came to all the things that the Lord had done for them. Therefore, the first part of the prophet’s message in verses 8b-9 rehearses certain extraordinary deeds that God had already done for Israel.

The prophet began his message by stating, “This is what the LORD God of Israel says.” His audience needed to know that he was the Lord’s messenger with the Lord’s message. Then, using emphatic language, the Lord reminded the Israelites of five things He had done for them. (1) I brought you up out of Egypt; (2) I delivered you from bondage; (3) I rescued you from your oppressors, the Egyptians; (4) I drove out the Canaanites before you; and (5) it was I who gave you the promised land. The Israelites needed to be reminded again of the wondrous deeds the Lord had done for them.

When Israel cried out, God sent a prophet with a message before sending a deliverer. What does this say to you about how God addresses your needs?



Day 3: Judges 6:10

Consider the significance of the statement, “I am the LORD your God.”

The second part of God’s message through His prophet was an indictment of Israel’s unfaithfulness to the Lord. God reminded them that He said, “I am the LORD your God.” This statement is reminiscent of when the Lord told Moses to tell the Israelites that “I AM WHO I AM” sent him to deliver them from Egypt (Ex. 3:14). In this title, the Lord was declaring, “I will always be who I have always been.” Therefore, God was stating that as He has always been faithful to His covenant people, He would continue to be faithful to them.

Given everything the Lord had already done for Israel, they had every reason to be devoted to Him. Instead, they abandoned the Lord for the gods of the Amorites. The distress they were experiencing was because they “did not obey” the Lord. They were focused on getting relief when what they needed was repentance.

One might think God’s message to Israel was harsh, but nothing could be further from the truth. In His kindness, the Lord exposed their sin and the reasons for their distress, and in so doing gave them an opportunity to repent of their sin and experience restoration. The people needed to recognize that rejecting their false gods and being faithfully devoted to the Lord was the only way they would experience true and lasting peace.

What outcomes should you anticipate if you live in disobedience to God?



Day 4: Judges 6:11-12

Ponder why the angel called Gideon a “valiant warrior.”

Verse 11 introduces Gideon, the judge whom God chose to save Israel from the Midianites and their allies. Gideon’s name means “to mutilate” or “to hack.” It was a fitting name for one who would mutilate and hack down an altar to Baal. Some biblical scholars believe he previously had a different name, and that Gideon became his nickname or new name after what he did.

As the account begins, Gideon was “threshing wheat in the winepress” on his father’s farm in Ophrah “in order to hide it from the Midianites.” The winepress would have been a safer place than a more exposed threshing floor. This indicates that Gideon shared the same fear the rest of the Israelites had of the Midianites. The location of Ophrah is unknown, but given Gideon was from the tribe of Manasseh, it was probably located within its tribal allotment.

As Gideon was working, “the angel of the LORD” appeared and said, “The LORD is with you, valiant warrior.” This is an amazing statement. Gideon did not appear to be a valiant warrior. He was hiding like everyone else just hoping to survive. Furthermore, given the hesitancy he will show when he receives his commission to rise up against the Midianites, it may have been frustrating for Gideon to be called *valiant warrior*. But the angel of the Lord knew that the Lord could and would take this timid man and make him into a valiant warrior.

How does God’s view of you differ from how you often see yourself?



Day 5: Judges 6:13-16

Highlight the phrase, “But I will be with you” (v. 16).

Gideon questioned the angel, “If the Lord is with us, then why has He allowed all these terrible things to happen to us? And if the Lord is so mighty, then where are all the wondrous things we have heard from our forefathers that He is capable of doing? How could the Lord bring us out of Egypt and then turn around and abandon us to the Midianites?” Gideon’s facts were correct, but his conclusion was wrong. He blamed God for the perilous situation when it was Israel that was responsible for it.

The angel appeared to ignore Gideon. He told Gideon, “Go in the strength you have and deliver Israel from the grasp of Midian.” Since the Lord was sending him, the Lord would give Gideon the strength to accomplish it. When the Lord calls His servants to do what is impossible for them, He will always instill within them everything they need to accomplish it.

Gideon’s fear accentuated his sense of inadequacy. However, the Lord supplied Gideon everything he needed to accomplish God’s will, saying, “But I will be with you.” The Lord’s presence was everything Gideon would need to strike down the entire host of Midianites as if they were but “one man.” When God is with you, everyone else might as well be also.

How does the assurance of God’s presence negate your excuse of inadequacy?

APPLY THE TEXT

Why do people, especially believers, who turn their backs on God experience undesirable consequences? What causes you to have difficulty trusting in God? How can doubting God be turned into trusting God?

JOURNAL

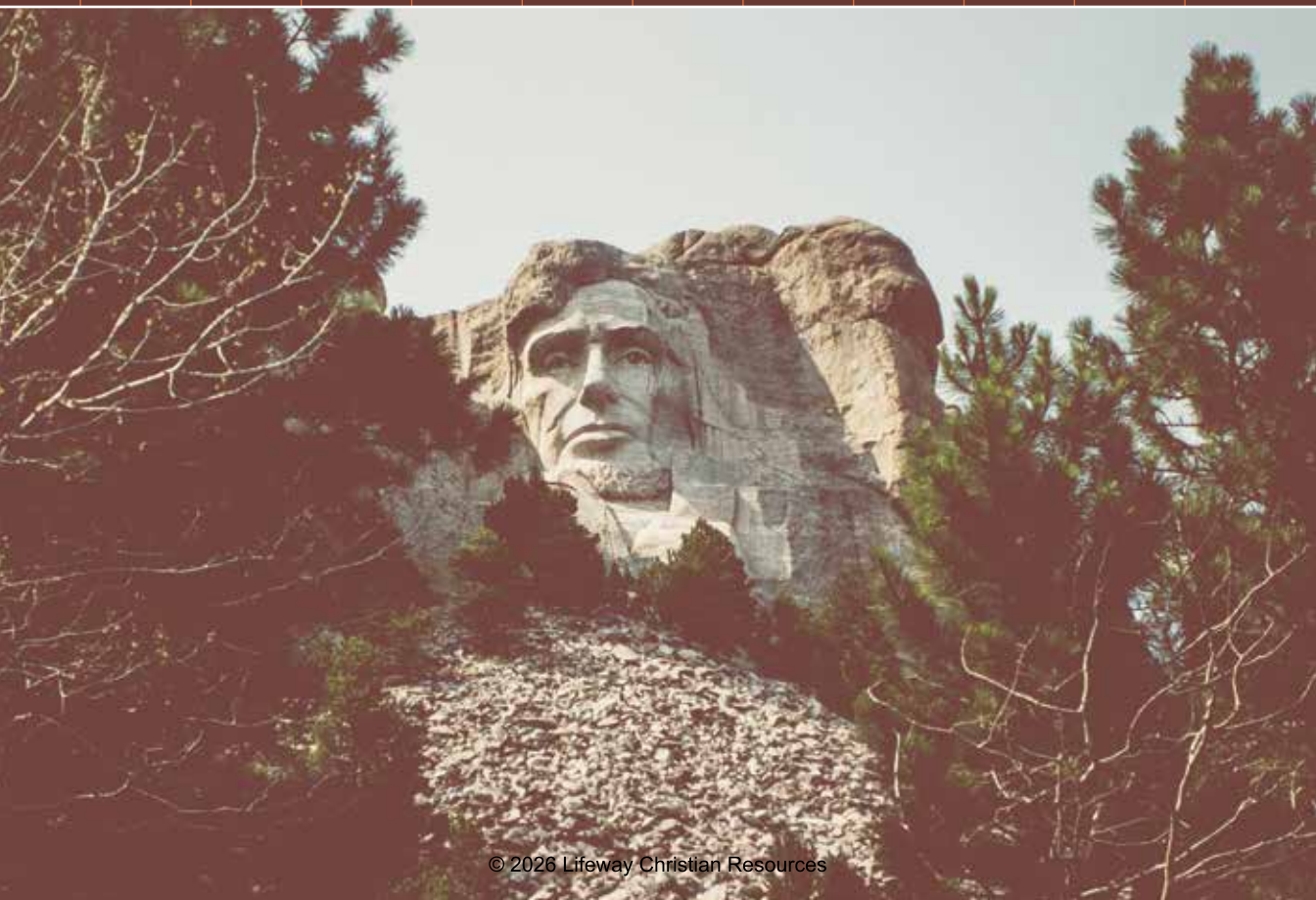


SESSION 10

Trust

JUDGES 7:1-8,19-23

GOD PROVIDED VICTORY AND BROUGHT HIMSELF GLORY THROUGH GIDEON'S ARMY.



The expression, “Cinderella story,” is an analogy that originates from the children’s story of Cinderella. It refers to someone who has come from obscurity to surprisingly gain significant recognition or success. Most people enjoy a good Cinderella story. Someone like Abraham Lincoln, who came from a humble background to become president, is an example of a Cinderella story. There are many occasions in the Bible when God used unlikely people to do extraordinary things so that He would receive the glory.

*WHY DO STORIES OF PEOPLE RISING FROM HUMBLE CIRCUMSTANCES
TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS RESONATE SO STRONGLY WITH US?*

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Judges 7:1–8:21 recounts Gideon’s victory over Midian. He began with thirty-two thousand men, but God reduced the number to three hundred. This was to ensure that Israel knew the victory was by God’s power, not their own strength. In the aftermath of victory over Midian, the Israelites wanted to make Gideon king. But he refused, saying God would be their king (Judg. 8:22-23).

Though there was peace in Israel for forty years until Gideon died, Gideon himself led all of Israel to worship an idol in his hometown. When Gideon died the Israelites began worshiping the Baals again (8:24-32).

Judges 8:33–9:57 demonstrates how much Israel turned away from God. Though Gideon had refused an offer to become king, his son, Abimelech (meaning “my father is king”), maneuvered himself into a position that led the citizens of Shechem and Beth-millo to make him king. Abimelech had all his brothers killed, except for the youngest, Jotham, who escaped. Jotham pronounced a curse on Abimelech and his subjects. After three years, God dealt with

their wickedness by causing a civil war to break out between them. The citizens of Shechem, who made Abimelech king, were slaughtered, and Abimelech perished when a woman dropped a millstone on his head.

Judges 10:1-5 mentions two minor judges, Tola and Jair. After them, Jephthah was the next major judge to save Israel after Israel “abandoned the LORD” and began worshiping other gods. Jephthah led Israel to victory over the Ammonites and judged Israel for six years (10:6–12:7). After Jephthah, Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon judged Israel (12:8-15).

It is notable that after the Gideon narrative, instead of indicating “the land had peace” for a number of years (3:30; 5:31; 8:28), the remaining narratives conclude with the phrase, “judged Israel” (a number of) years (10:2-3; 12:8-9,11,13-14; 16:31). Israel may have experienced some stability, but there was no more rest.



Judges 7:1-8,19-23

1 Jerubbaal^A (that is, Gideon) and all the troops who were with him, got up early and camped beside the **spring of Harod.** **B** The camp of Midian was north of them, below the hill of Moreh, in the valley. **2** The LORD said to Gideon, “You have too many troops for me to hand the Midianites over to them, or else Israel might elevate themselves over me and say, ‘I saved myself.’” **3** Now announce to the troops, “Whoever is **fearful and trembling** **C** may turn back and leave Mount Gilead.” So twenty-two thousand of the troops turned back, but ten thousand remained. **4** Then the LORD said to Gideon, “There are **still too many** **D** troops. Take them down to the water, and I will test them for you there. If I say to you, ‘This one can go with you,’ he can go. But if I say about anyone, ‘This one cannot go with you,’ he cannot go.” **5** So he brought the troops down to the water, and the LORD said to Gideon, “Separate everyone who laps water with his tongue like a dog. Do the same with everyone who kneels to drink.” **6** The number of those who lapped with their hands to their mouths was three hundred men, and all the rest of the troops knelt to drink water. **7** The LORD said to Gideon, “**I will deliver you** **E** with the three hundred men who lapped and hand the Midianites over to you. But everyone else is to go home.” **8** So Gideon sent all the Israelites to their tents but kept the three hundred troops, who took the provisions and their rams’ horns. The camp of Midian was below him in the valley. [...] **19** Gideon and the hundred men who were with him went to the outpost of the camp at the beginning of the **middle watch** **F** after the sentries had been stationed. They blew their rams’ horns and broke the pitchers that were in their hands. **20** The three companies blew their rams’ horns and shattered their pitchers. They held their torches in their left hands and their rams’ horns to blow in their right hands, and they shouted, “A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!” **21** Each Israelite took his position around the camp, and the entire Midianite army began to run, and they cried out as they fled. **22** When Gideon’s men blew their three hundred rams’ horns, the LORD caused the men in the whole army to **turn on each other** **G** with their swords. They fled to Acacia House in the direction of Zererah as far as the border of Abel-meholah near Tabbath. **23** Then the men of Israel were called from Naphtali, Asher, and Manasseh, and they pursued the Midianites.

Key Words

A. In Hebrew, the name meant “let the Baal contend.” Gideon earned the name when he tore down Baal’s altar (Judg. 6:25-32).

B. In Hebrew, “Harod” relates to “trembling.” The Midianite army camped about four miles north near the hill of Moreh.

C. God had said fear was a reason soldiers could stay home during a war (Deut. 20:5-9). It would affect overall morale and displayed a lack of faith in God.

D. Despite losing 22,000 soldiers to fear, God said the remaining 10,000 still needed to be reduced. God’s test would whittle the number down to three hundred (vv. 7-8).

E. God reduced the army to prove that He would bring victory.

F. Between 10 p.m. and 2 a.m. Only a few sentries guarding the camp’s perimeter would be awake.

G. God used the enemy to destroy itself in chaos, while the Israelites watched.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Too Many

(Judg. 7:1-3)

Believers dishonor God when they seek the glory that belongs to Him alone.

- **In what ways might we try to do God's work by our own might and for our glory?**

2. Still Too Many

(Judg. 7:4-8)

Believers need to trust that God's way of doing things is always best.

- **When have you had to trust God despite not understanding what He was doing or asking?**

3. Just Right

(Judg. 7:19-23)

Believers should pray for God to do what only He can do.

- **How should knowing that God acts in unpredictable ways impact how we live?**

Apply the Text

- **As a group, discuss what it means and what it looks like to try to do God's work by one's own might and for one's own glory. What results from such an approach?**

KEY DOCTRINE: God the Father

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. (See Psalm 47:8; Job 42:2.)

BIBLE SKILL: Respond emotionally to a passage from Scripture.

Gideon had his doubts when God said He would deliver Israel through him. He also may have wondered why God so drastically reduced his army. Prayerfully consider times when you had questions about what God was doing. How do you tend to respond when God doesn't make sense in your life? What can you do to trust Him more fully?

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Judges 7:1-3

Identify the reason God was reducing the number of Gideon's troops (v. 2).

Gideon was camped about five miles south of the Midianite army of one hundred twenty thousand men (Judg. 8:10) with only thirty-two thousand troops "beside the spring of Harod." Ironically, the stream of Harod means "The Spring of Trembling." This was an apt name for the spring, for according to verse 3 it describes the mental and physical state of the majority of Gideon's troops as they anticipated the looming battle.

Given the Midianite army outnumbered the Israelites by nearly four to one, Gideon received an instruction from God that must have been completely unexpected. The Lord told him he had "too many troops" for the Lord to give the Israelites a victory over the Midianites. The Lord knew that if He gave Israel the victory with their thirty-two thousand troops over Midian's one hundred twenty thousand troops, then Israel would boast and take credit for the amazing victory instead of recognizing that it was God who did it for them. Therefore, God told Gideon to announce to his troops that whoever was "fearful and trembling" at the prospect of fighting the Midianites could leave. Gideon must have been shocked to see twenty-two thousand of his thirty-two thousand men abandon him. With only ten thousand men remaining, Gideon's army went from being outnumbered by almost four to one to being outnumbered by his enemies twelve to one.

In what ways might we try to do God's work by our might and for our glory?



Day 2: Judges 7:4-7

Imagine what Gideon must have thought when God said, "There are still too many troops."

Gideon had lost nearly seventy percent of his army. But the Lord had not finished downsizing Gideon's army. There had to be no doubt that a victory over the Midianites would be because God did it. So the Lord said to Gideon, "There are still too many troops." It is also difficult to imagine that Gideon was perfectly calm when he received this word. God instructed Gideon to take his troops down to the spring where He would "test them."

Gideon obeyed the Lord and brought his troops to the water. God instructed him to separate the men into two groups based on how they drank from the spring. Everyone who lowered themselves and lapped the "water with his tongue like a dog" was put in one group. The ones who knelt, scooped the water up, and drank it from their cupped hands were to be separated into a second group. Of the ten thousand men who drank at the spring, only three hundred scooped up the water and drank it from cupped hands. The Lord told Gideon He would save Israel using these three hundred men.

The Lord downsized the army so that He would receive all of the glory for defeating Israel's enemies. The weaker Israelites would be forced to completely trust in the Lord if they were to defeat the Midianites.

What do these verses reveal about God's desire for you to rely on Him rather than your own strength?



Day 3: Judges 7:8

Read how God reassured Gideon in verses 9-15.

Gideon obeyed and sent everyone back to their tents except the three hundred men the Lord had chosen to stay. The three hundred left behind took the provisions and rams' horns from those who returned home. This insured every one of the three hundred men had everything they would need for what lay ahead of them.

The following verses indicate Gideon's growing fears made him reluctant to launch an attack against the Midianites. So the Lord instructed him to take his servant with him to spy on their enemy. God assured Gideon that he would then be "encouraged to attack the camp" (v. 11). Though the Midianites and Amalekites were "like a swarm of locusts" (v. 12), Gideon overheard Midianite men discussing a dream one of them had revealing that God would give Gideon victory over them. Gideon finally trusted the Lord when he heard the words of these Midianites.

The Lord recognized Gideon's human frailty. In His patience and kindness, He used the enemy to confirm what He had promised Gideon. Gideon then worshiped the Lord and returned to his camp, realizing that the Lord had already given him and his men victory over their enemy (v. 15). Worship is always a proper response to God's goodness.

When have you had to trust God despite not understanding what He was doing or asking?



Day 4: Judges 7:19-20

Picture in your mind the scene described in the verses.

Gideon divided his men into three groups of one hundred in each company. He equipped each man with a ram's horn in one hand and an empty pitcher with a torch inside of it in the other hand. They had dispersed themselves all around the camp. When Gideon's company blew their rams' horns, the other companies were to do the same. Verse 19 indicates Gideon's men went to "the outpost" of the enemy camp "at the beginning of the middle watch," which was midnight. This was a good time because the guards leaving their posts would have been tired and their replacements were still getting themselves correctly situated. It was then "they blew their rams' horns and broke the pitchers that were in their hands."

Verse 20 summarizes what Gideon's men did. First, they blew their horns. Second, they smashed their jars. Third, they held up their lit torches that had been concealed in the jars. In a normal nighttime military maneuver, only someone at the front of a company would have been carrying a lit torch. Gideon's three hundred men appeared to be three hundred companies surrounding the Midianites. Finally, they shouted, "A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!" Even though "sword" was probably metaphorical for "battle," it is ironic they said sword, because it does not appear that any of them were carrying a sword.

Where is God calling you to step out boldly in faith, even if the plan is beyond your comfort zone?



Day 5: Judges 7:21-22

Highlight the phrase “the LORD caused . . .”

When the Midianites heard the horns blowing and the jars smashing and saw the torches, they thought they were surrounded by a large enemy. Pandemonium broke out as the terrified Midianites cried out as they attempted to escape. We must not forget that the Lord had set the stage with the foreboding dream of defeat that apparently had been circulating throughout the Midianite camp (vv. 13-14).

There was so much chaos that the Lord caused all the Midianites to begin attacking each other with their swords. The actual locations to which they fled is uncertain, but it makes sense that they fled east toward the Jordan so they could return to their desert homelands.

After the Lord had won the battle for Israel, Gideon called upon men “from Naphtali, Asher, and Manasseh,” most likely those whom the Lord rejected for the assault on the Midianite camp (v. 8), to pursue the fleeing Midianites. It is not clear if God had given Gideon His blessing to call these new men, possibly from those rejected earlier, into the battle. It is possible that Gideon, caught up in the overwhelming triumph, called these men back into service despite God’s directions.

God fulfilled His word and gave Israel victory. He still stands ready to go into any battle with His people.

How should knowing that God acts in unpredictable ways impact how we live?

APPLY THE TEXT

Why is it sometimes difficult to trust that God’s ways of doing things are always best?

JOURNAL



SESSION 11

Compromise

JUDGES 16:16-31

**SAMSON'S PHYSICAL STRENGTH COULD NOT SAVE HIM FROM THE
CONSEQUENCES OF HIS WEAK MORAL CHARACTER.**



Parents, grandparents, teachers, and anyone who has spent time with young children recognize the importance of teaching the concept of cause and effect. The idea is that for every cause there is an effect and that for every effect there was a cause. In other words, there are consequences to every person's thoughts, behaviors, and actions. In the Bible, Samson is one example among many who suffered the consequences of a weak moral character.

*HOW HAS UNDERSTANDING THE PRINCIPLE OF CAUSE AND EFFECT
INFLUENCED THE CHOICES YOU MAKE IN LIFE?*

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

The concluding nine chapters of the book of Judges contain two sections. The first is an account of Samson, the last of the judges (Judg. 13:1–16:31). It begins with his unusual birth. The angel of the Lord appeared to his barren mother and informed her that she and her husband would have a son and that they must raise him as a Nazirite (13:2-7). This meant that he was not to consume anything derived from the grapevine, he was to abstain from alcohol, his hair was never to be cut, and he was to avoid contact with any corpse (Num. 6:1-21). The Spirit of the Lord stirred Samson, and he was a judge in Israel for twenty years (Judg. 13:25; 15:20).

Samson, however, had a flawed character and kept the wrong company. Despite his parents' protests, he demanded that they arrange for him to marry a young Philistine woman in Timnah. On his way there, Samson killed an attacking lion with his bare hands, later returned to it, and scooped honey out of its carcass. He kept this secret from his parents because it was a violation of his Nazirite vow.

He married the Philistine woman, but after she betrayed his trust, her father had her marry someone else. When Samson learned what his father-in-law had done, he exacted revenge on the Philistines. He burned up their grain, vineyards, and olive groves, and then killed one thousand of their men with the jawbone of a donkey (14:1–15:20).

Next, Samson became romantically involved with another woman, Delilah. This account is the focus of this week's study.

The last section of the book of Judges (17:1–21:25) contains two accounts that, taken together, describe what some have called the "Canaanization of Israel" because the Israelites behaved as wickedly as the Canaanites did. Israel's behavior was characterized by political, civil, moral, and spiritual chaos as "everyone did whatever seemed right to him" (21:25).



Judges 16:16-31

16 Because **she**^A nagged him day after day and pleaded with him until she wore him out, **17** he told her the **whole truth**^B and said to her, “My hair has never been cut, because I am a **Nazirite**^C to God from birth. If I am shaved, my strength will leave me, and I will become weak and be like any other man.” **18** When Delilah realized that he had told her the whole truth, she sent this message to the Philistine leaders: “Come one more time, for he has told me the whole truth.” The Philistine leaders came to her and brought the **silver**^D with them. **19** Then she let him fall asleep on her lap and called a man to shave off the seven braids on his head. In this way, she made him helpless, and his strength left him. **20** Then she cried, “Samson, the Philistines are here!” When he awoke from his sleep, he said, “I will escape as I did before and shake myself free.” But he **did not know that the Lord had left him**.^E **21** The Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes. They brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze shackles, and he was forced to grind grain in the prison. **22** But his hair began to grow back after it had been shaved. **23** Now the Philistine leaders gathered together to offer a great sacrifice to their god Dagon. They rejoiced and said: Our god has handed over our enemy Samson to us. **24** When the people saw him, they praised their god and said: Our god has handed over to us our enemy who destroyed our land and who multiplied our dead. **25** When they were in good spirits, they said, “Bring Samson here to **entertain us**.”^F So they brought Samson from prison, and he entertained them. They had him stand between the pillars. **26** Samson said to the young man who was leading him by the hand, “Lead me where I can feel the pillars supporting the temple, so I can lean against them.” **27** The temple was full of men and women; all the leaders of the Philistines were there, and about three thousand men and women were on the roof watching Samson entertain them. **28** He **called out**^G to the Lord, “Lord God, please remember me. Strengthen me, God, just once more. With one act of vengeance, let me pay back the Philistines for my two eyes.” **29** Samson took hold of the two middle pillars supporting the temple and leaned against them, one on his right hand and the other on his left. **30** Samson said, “Let me die with the Philistines.” He pushed with all his might, and the temple fell on the leaders and all the people in it. And those he killed at his death were more than those he had killed in his life. **31** Then his brothers and his father’s whole family came down, carried him back, and buried him between Zorah and Eshtaol in the tomb of his father Manoah. So he judged Israel twenty years.

Key Words

A. Delilah, a woman who Samson loved. The Philistines bribed her to tell them the source of his strength so they could weaken him (vv. 4-5).

B. On three occasions, Samson had given Delilah faulty information (vv. 6-14). This time, though, he did not.

C. The Hebrew term *nazir* identified one separated or consecrated. Nazirites were dedicated to God (Num. 6:1-21). Their vow meant abstaining from wine or beer, avoiding dead bodies, and never cutting their hair.

D. The Philistines paid Delilah 5,500 shekels of silver to pass along the secret of his strength to them. By comparison, a slave was worth thirty shekels of silver (Ex. 21:32).

E. Ultimately, Samson’s strength depended on God’s presence. But ongoing compromise left him unaware of the Lord’s absence in his life.

F. They wanted to mock their humiliated enemy.

G. Though his motives may have been selfish, Samson finally turned to God for help.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Strength Departed

(Judg. 16:16-20)

Believers should avoid putting themselves in situations that will tempt them to sin.

- **How can the people with whom we choose to associate impact our ability to remain faithful to God?**

2. Samson Defeated

(Judg. 16:21-25)

Believers who compromise their faithfulness to God will eventually be put to shame.

- **What do you think was Samson's greatest loss, and why?**

3. Philistines Destroyed

(Judg. 16:26-31)

Believers can be confident that God does not abandon them, in spite of their sin.

- **In light of Samson's story, how would you counsel someone who is experiencing the consequences of sinful choices?**

Apply the Text

- **How can your Bible study group encourage one another to avoid putting yourselves in situations that will tempt you to sin?**
- **In what areas of your lives are you susceptible to being tempted to compromise your faithfulness to God?**

KEY DOCTRINE:

God's Purpose of Grace

Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. (See John 10:27-29; Colossians 1:12-14.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Memorize a verse and apply it to a real-life situation.

Memorize Psalm 28:7, then write the verse in your own words. Reflect on ways Samson's life illustrated this verse and ways that he fell short. Write a brief prayer, asking God to help you trust Him more, celebrate His work in your life, and show gratitude for all He has done.

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Judges 16:16-17

As background, read Judges 13:1-7.

Judges 16:4 introduces Delilah, whose name means “flirt,” stating that Samson “fell in love” with her. When the five Philistine governors learned of this, they saw it as a possible opportunity to capitalize on Samson’s vulnerability. They went to Delilah to convince her to persuade Samson to reveal the source of his strength so that they could take him captive. If she did this, each leader promised to give Delilah 1,100 pieces of silver.

Consequently, Delilah asked Samson, “How could someone tie you up and make you helpless?” (v. 6). He made up different false ways it could happen (vv. 7,11,13). But she was committed to getting her silver. So Delilah relentlessly nagged Samson “until she wore him out.”

Samson “told her the whole truth”—that his strength came from his relationship with God as a Nazirite from birth. His hair was not to be cut as one of the signs of his special calling of God—his separation to God. It is as if he was inviting her to cut his hair. Maybe he wanted to settle down with Delilah and live according to his own desires. After all, Samson never made the Nazirite vow to the Lord himself. It was placed upon him before he was born. Even if Samson expected Delilah to cut his hair, he could not have predicted everything that happened to him next.

Why do you think Samson finally gave in to Delilah’s pressure? What lessons can you learn from this passage about guarding your heart?



Day 2: Judges 16:18-20

Highlight the phrase “he did not know that the LORD had left him” (v. 20).

This time “Delilah realized that he had told her the whole truth.” She was so confident she knew the truth concerning the source of Samson’s strength that she sent for the Philistine leaders to come. She was not going to do anything to Samson until they came. She had to be sure they would deal with Samson after she had betrayed him. Samson fell asleep as he had done before. Everything worked perfectly according to Delilah’s plan, but Samson put himself into the situation that brought all of it on. When believers entwine themselves with unbelievers, they become spiritually vulnerable (1 Cor. 15:33).

As she had done before, Delilah cried out, “Samson, the Philistines are here!” As before, the Philistines were in the next room waiting to ambush Samson (vv. 9,12). This time, when he awoke from his sleep and said, “I will escape as I did before and shake myself free,” it did not happen.

Samson “did not know that the LORD had left him.” It was not really Samson’s hair that had given him his power; it was the Lord Himself. The statement that the Lord had left Samson means that the Lord withdrew His strength from him. However, it did not mean that the Lord had altogether abandoned him. While believers will experience His discipline, the Lord will never forsake His people.

How do you discern when someone’s influence is leading you away from God’s purpose?



Day 3: Judges 16:21-22

Reflect on the things Samson lost as a result of his weak character.

Ironically, the man who lived his life by the lust of his eyes had his eyes gouged out. The man who could not be restrained was bound in bronze shackles. The man who proudly went wherever he pleased was now forced to grind grain in prison like an animal. And the man who appeared to have little regard for others was now humiliated. In many ways, Samson was experiencing personally what the nation of Israel repeatedly experienced during the time of the judges.

However, the story did not end there. At the same time, the Lord was still at work in Samson's life—"his hair began to grow back after it had been shaved." This simple statement leads readers to understand that God was not finished with Samson just yet. The Lord of second chances was demonstrating grace. He was in the process of restoring Samson because He was committed to completing the work in Samson that He had begun. The Lord had called Samson before his birth to be a judge in Israel who would "begin to save Israel from the power of the Philistines" (13:5). God's promise and purpose for Samson had not changed.

What do you think was Samson's greatest loss, and why?



Day 4: Judges 16:23-25

Notice whom the Philistines credited for Samson's downfall.

At the beginning of Samson's narrative in Judges 13:1, the writer indicated the Israelites again did what was literally "the evil" in the Lord's sight. That evil was abandoning the Lord to worship the Baals and other gods of Canaan. Dagon was a Canaanite god that was tied to the fertility of grains and believed to be the father of Baal. When the Philistines entered Canaan, they adopted Dagon as their patron god. They believed their god had delivered their most feared enemy, Samson, to them. Therefore, they "gathered together to offer a great sacrifice to their god Dagon" and praise him for what he had done. The Philistines noted that, over the years, Samson "destroyed our land and had multiplied our dead." With him in chains, they not only were celebrating with a great sacrifice, but they also were retaliating. Samson had become their trophy.

"In good spirits" likely refers to drunkenness. In that condition, the leaders decided to degrade Samson further by bringing him out to entertain his oppressors. The Philistines may have hurled insults at Samson, but his humiliating circumstances may have been enough to amuse the crowd.

Archaeological evidence of Philistine temples suggests that the roof and upper story of this large temple were supported by two cedar pillars set on round stone bases. It would have been between pillars like this where they placed Samson.

Why do you think God allowed Samson to be in this position?



Day 5: Judges 16:26-31

Note the evidence that God had not abandoned Samson.

Samson was now being led by the hand of a young servant boy. He asked the young man to lead him to the pillars supporting the temple so he could “lean against them.” It appears he was already thinking about how he could literally take them all down.

Samson “called out to the LORD.” First, he called upon the Lord to “remember” him. In Hebrew, to “remember” means “to be mindful of” or “to act on behalf of.” Second, Samson asked the Lord to give him the strength to “pay back the Philistines” for gouging out his eyes. His motivation for killing the Philistines was selfish, just as it had been before. In the end, Samson was all about Samson. He leaned into the pillars supporting the entire temple, and as he prayed that the Lord would let him die with the Philistines, he “pushed with all his might.” The entire temple collapsed killing everyone there. God answered Samson’s prayer by supplying this one final burst of supernatural strength. He had not abandoned Samson, in spite of his sin.

The statement that Samson “judged Israel twenty years” indicates that even though Samson suffered because of his sinful choices, the Lord nonetheless accomplished His purpose through Samson, which was “to save Israel from the power of the Philistines” (13:5).

What steps can you take to surrender your brokenness to God for His purposes?

APPLY THE TEXT

When was a time you sinned against God and discovered He did not abandon you? How should you respond to God’s faithfulness to never abandon you in spite of your sin? How does God’s faithfulness to you affect your faithfulness to Him?

JOURNAL



SESSION 12

Faithfulness

RUTH 1:11-18; 2:5-12

IN THE MIDST OF NAOMI'S TRAGEDY, GOD DEMONSTRATED
HIS CARE AND SOVEREIGNTY.



In his book, *A Grief Observed*, C.S. Lewis wrote, “No one ever told me that grief felt so like fear. I am not afraid, but the sensation is like being afraid.”¹ People who face tragedy feel both grief and fear. They wonder what the loss means for their future. When grief and fear cloud your path, nothing comforts your heart and gives you the courage to take steps into the unknown like knowing that God cares and controls every moment of your life.

HOW MIGHT FAITH IN GOD’S CARE AND CONTROL HELP
A PERSON NAVIGATE GRIEF AND FEAR?

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

The book of Ruth comes toward the end of the judges’ rule over Israel just before the start of Israel’s reign of kings. To this point, Israel had been a conquering people. Joshua exhibited great faith as he led the people into the promised land by conquering Jericho. God displayed the beauty of His faithfulness through people like Rahab (Josh. 2), and through Israel’s obedience to march around the walls of Jericho blowing their trumpets (Josh. 6). Later, Caleb demonstrated his trust in the Lord’s sovereignty by asking Joshua to give him the land the Lord promised him years before. In each story, God’s people rose to honor the Lord for His providential care.

However, throughout this period in their history, Israel struggled with idolatry and immorality. God ordained judges to rule the people as they proceeded through cycles of sin, judgment, confession, and deliverance. Israel’s leaders, the judges, and the people needed direction.

The book of Ruth reminds the reader that God’s providence and faithfulness will not fail no matter how dark the times. As the book opens, the writer introduces a Judean family moving from Bethlehem to Moab. Elimelech and Naomi’s two sons married Moabite wives, Orpah and Ruth. Within ten years, Elimelech and his two sons died.

The story is one of tragic loss, deep loyalty, and God’s faithfulness to Ruth. As the story unfolds, Ruth decided to remain with Naomi after the loss of her husband. She followed God into an unknown future and found God faithful through every trial and hardship. In chapters 1–2, Ruth met a close relative who would have a significant role in God’s redemptive story. Through a foreigner and someone God providentially placed in Ruth’s path, God continued to fulfill His promise of redemption (Gen. 3:15). Assured of His faithfulness, we can walk confidently into every situation in life.

1. Lewis, C.S. *A Grief Observed* (HarperCollins, 1961) 3.



Ruth 1:11-18; 2:5-12

Key Words

1:11 But Naomi **A** replied, “Return home, my daughters. **B** Why do you want to go with me? Am I able to have any **more sons C** who could become your husbands? **12** Return home, my daughters. Go on, for I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me to have a husband tonight and to bear sons, **13** would you be willing to wait for them to grow up? Would you restrain yourselves from remarrying? No, my daughters, my life is much too bitter for you to share, because the LORD’s hand has turned against me.” **14** Again they wept loudly, and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth **clung D** to her. **15** Naomi said, “Look, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods. Follow your sister-in-law.” **16** But Ruth replied: Don’t plead with me to abandon you or to return and not follow you. For wherever you go, I will go, and wherever you live, I will live; your people will be my people, and your God will be **my God. E** **17** Where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD punish me, and do so severely, if anything but death separates you and me. **18** When Naomi saw that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped talking to her. [. . .] **2:5 Boaz F** asked his servant who was in charge of the harvesters, “Whose young woman is this?” **6** The servant answered, “She is the young Moabite woman who returned with Naomi from the territory of Moab. **7** She asked, ‘Will you let me **gather fallen grain G** among the bundles behind the harvesters?’ She came and has been on her feet since early morning, except that she rested a little in the shelter.” **8** Then Boaz said to Ruth, “Listen, my daughter. Don’t go and gather grain in another field, and don’t leave this one, but stay here close to my female servants. **9** See which field they are harvesting, and follow them. Haven’t I ordered the young men not to touch you? When you are thirsty, go and drink from the jars the young men have filled.” **10** She fell facedown, bowed to the ground, and said to him, “Why have I found favor with you, so that you notice me, although I am a foreigner?” **11** Boaz answered her, “Everything you have done for your mother-in-law since your husband’s death has been fully reported to me: how you left your father and mother and your native land, and how you came to a people you didn’t previously know. **12** May the LORD reward you for what you have done, and may you receive a full reward from the LORD God of Israel, **under whose wings H** you have come for refuge.”

A. The wife of Elimelech, an Israelite. Her family moved to Moab during a famine.

B. Naomi’s sons married Moabite women. Elimelech and both sons died in Moab, leaving the three women with choices to make.

C. In levirate marriage, a dead man’s relative married his widow to protect the family line.

D. Hebrew wording indicates extreme loyalty, like attaching one object to another. It highlights a contrast between Ruth and Orpah.

E. Moabites worshiped Chemosh, but Ruth embraced the God of Israel. She even used His covenant name in verse 17.

F. A relative of Elimelech and “a prominent man of noble character” in Bethlehem (2:1). Ruth gathered grain in a field that he owned (2:3).

G. The law encouraged “gleaning,” allowing the poor to gather grain that fell during the harvest. Often, workers were told to drop grain on purpose (Lev. 19:9-10; Deut. 24:19-22).

H. Old Testament writers often used the image of God’s wings to describe His protection. See Psalm 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 61:4; 63:7; and 91:4.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Loss

(Ruth 1:11-15)

Believers will suffer loss.

- **Why does loss draw some people closer to God, while others struggle with anger toward God? How can the church community be a source of compassion for both?**

2. Loyalty

(Ruth 1:16-18)

We need to allow others to minister to us.

- **What value does society place on loyalty?**
- **How can loyalty be a way to view God's provision and protection?**

3. Provision

(Ruth 2:5-12)

Believers can be confident in God's sovereign ability to provide for our needs.

- **How has God provided for you in a way that assured you of His care?**

Apply the Text

- **What are some moments of loss experienced by members of your group? How did the loss impact their faith?**
- **What specific ways could your group minister to others most effectively during difficult seasons?**

KEY DOCTRINE:

God

God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. (See Proverbs 16:33; Romans 8:28.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Use Bible Study tools to learn more about a place in the Bible.

Using a Bible atlas, locate Moab and note its proximity to Israel. Why would Elimelech take his family to Moab during the famine in Israel? Read an article about Moab in a Bible dictionary. Use a concordance to find other times Moab is mentioned in the Bible. For each verse, write a summary statement that describes the role Moab played in biblical narrative.

DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Ruth 1:11-13

Notice how Naomi described her life.

Prior to her plea for Orpah and Ruth to “return home” to Moab, Naomi experienced the unimaginable loss of her husband and two sons. In ancient times, widows and orphans were the most vulnerable people in society. Naomi felt the weight of providing for her two daughters-in-law. Her security was lost and her future bleak.

Naomi loved Orpah and Ruth as her own daughters. But logically speaking, it made no sense for them to stay with her. They had their whole lives ahead of them. She earnestly urged them to return to Moab by pointing out her inability to provide husbands for them. Naomi felt responsible for them but could not be responsible for them. By addressing her daughters-in-law as “my daughters,” Naomi highlighted their deep emotional connection.

Naomi emphasized her current lack of sons to offer. She then highlighted her inability to bear more sons in the future. Naomi presented a compelling argument that she was unable to provide for Ruth and Orpah now or in the foreseeable future. From her perspective, the situation seemed entirely bleak and beyond redemption. This layered argument underscores her deep sense of despair and helplessness. Naomi felt trapped in circumstances she believed could not change, thus portraying a truly hopeless and irreparable scenario. Her losses embittered her soul.

When have you faced a situation that seemed hopeless? How did you respond?



Day 2: Ruth 1:14-15

Circle the word “clung.”

At first, both daughters-in-law rejected Naomi’s directions to head back home. Ruth and Orpah each insisted that they would return with Naomi (see v. 10). However, Naomi’s stronger appeal in verses 11-13 apparently convinced one of the Moabite women to return home. While both women wept loudly at the prospect of being separated, the phrase “Orpah kissed her mother-in-law” emphasizes that she would not be continuing on the trip. The text does not explain Orpah’s motives, but her actions confirm that this was a farewell kiss. Nothing more was said of Orpah.

In contrast to Orpah, Ruth “clung to” Naomi. Genesis 2:24 uses the same word *clung* as it describes how a man “leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife.” Ruth bonded with Naomi and entered into her uncertain future. She felt deeply the loss of her husband but also the loss in Naomi’s heart, and she would not allow Naomi to suffer alone. Sacrificial love enters into the bitterness and pain of another without prejudice.

Ruth’s loyalty required sacrifice. What does true loyalty look like in your life today?



Day 3: Ruth 1:16-18

Consider what Ruth's loyalty to Naomi reveals about sacrificial love.

Ruth's reply to Naomi's plea to return home demonstrated a deep loyalty birthed out of sincere love. She fully committed herself to Naomi's country, home, people, and God. Ruth not only committed to live alongside Naomi and adopt all the nuances of her life, but to stay with her until death.

Ruth's words capture the beauty of true love. She opened her heart to her mother-in-law without reservation or hesitation. She begged for Naomi to accept her decision to remain with her. She enjoined her life to Naomi's and called on God to witness her promise. Ruth's unselfish loyalty has been quoted, praised, and shared throughout generations. In an age of self-promotion and individualism, loyal love stands out like a rare jewel.

Naomi could say nothing else. Rather than enter into another round of arguments, she accepted Ruth's position. The two widows continued their travels toward Judah, entrusting their futures to the Lord.

Ruth's words reveal her loyalty to Naomi. What relationships or commitments in your life require that kind of steadfastness?



Day 4: Ruth 2:5-7

Take note of the evidence of God's providence in these verses.

Naomi and Ruth returned to Bethlehem. Still feeling stung by God, Naomi told her old friends to call her Mara ("bitter") rather than Naomi, which means "pleasant" (1:20). But God was at work. Despite being a Gentile and new to Jewish laws, Ruth took advantage of gleaning, where workers allowed the poor to gather grain dropped during the harvest (see Lev. 19:9-10). In God's providence, Ruth began her work in the fields of Boaz, a member of Elimelech's family. When Boaz noticed her gleaning in his field, he asked, "Whose young woman is this?" His inquiry could have been to her clan or tribe status, but the question also probed whether she was engaged or married to another landowner like himself.

Through the servant's response, Boaz discovered a family connection. In addition to answering Boaz's question, the servant added a previous conversation he and Ruth exchanged at the start. Ruth had asked to follow "behind the harvesters" and gather the fallen grain from the bundles they carried. Harvesting fallen grain in the heat of the Judean fields would take a toll on anyone. The servant commented on Ruth's work ethic and need for a brief rest in a nearby shelter. Seeing her determination despite the harsh physical conditions must have endeared Boaz's heart to Ruth even more than his initial attraction.

Boaz extended kindness and protection to Ruth. Who in your life needs encouragement or support right now, and what practical steps can you take?



Day 5: Ruth 2:8-12

Pay attention to the imagery of Ruth being under God's wings (v. 12).

Boaz's tender address gives the reader the sense of immediate desire to protect Ruth. He told Ruth not to glean in another field. He did not want her to go outside of his protection but to stay close to the other female servants. He ordered his young men "not to touch" Ruth. He also provided for her to drink from the vessels of water reserved for the male servants.

Ruth was bewildered by Boaz's kindness. She had two strikes against her. She was from Moab and a woman. Strangers and widowed women were often targets of prejudice and abuse. However, Boaz noticed Ruth. The word *notice* means Boaz valued her.

Boaz recounted Ruth's story, highlighting her care for Naomi, the decision to leave her parents and homeland, and coming to a place where she knew no one. Think of the courage, commitment, and faith this took for Ruth. She had no idea how God would provide. By faith, she trusted God with the remainder of her life.

Moved by Ruth's character and commitment, Boaz prayed for the Lord to reward Ruth for her love to Naomi. By offering his protection, Boaz honored God and acted as the wings of God's care (Ps. 91:4; Prov. 14:31).

How has God provided for you in a way that assured you of His care?

How does God's provision impact the way you view the needs of your family during life's uncertainties?

APPLY THE TEXT

God builds our trust through times of loss and uncertainty, but these moments can also shake our faith. How has your faith been impacted during tough seasons? Who has walked alongside you through the pain? What are some life lessons you have learned from God and those He has graciously placed in your life?

JOURNAL



SESSION 13

Redemption

RUTH 3:8-13; 4:13-17

BOAZ PLAYED THE ROLE OF KINSMAN-REDEEMER BY MARRYING RUTH,
POINTING TO JESUS AS THE ULTIMATE REDEEMER.



Nobody likes feeling helpless and insecure during crises. Many struggle to ask others for help. Some may wonder if God is in control or even cares about their situation. Social media allows people to put on their best face, hide, and pretend they have it all together. Down deep, everyone knows they need something more than what society offers. God has answered the world's cry with an ultimate solution.

*WHAT HAS PROVIDED YOU A SENSE OF HOPE WHEN
EVERYTHING SEEMED OUT OF CONTROL?*

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Ruth's story demonstrates the magnitude of God's providential care for all people. From an uncertain future to a future secured by the redeeming grace of God, Ruth's story reminds the reader that God's promises and love are immeasurable. The story of Ruth demonstrates God's grace and reveals His glory, foreshadowing His redemptive plan through Jesus.

Simply trying to survive, Ruth went to the fields of one of their family's close relatives. While there, she met Boaz, "a prominent man of noble character" (2:1). Immediately, Boaz was attracted to Ruth's integrity (2:11-12), and he invited her to glean from the best parts of his field under his protection. Naomi knew this budding relationship could be a chance for their family redeemer to take notice of their plight. Boaz recognized Ruth's character and promised that if the nearest kinsman would not redeem her, he would. Boaz fulfilled his promise when the nearest family redeemer refused, thus offering the opportunity to Boaz. Boaz and Ruth married. From their union, Obed was born. Obed was the father

of Jesse, who was the father of Israel's most renowned king, David.

Naomi and Ruth needed security for their futures and to trust in God for their fears. According to Old Testament law, a family's real estate was inalienable (1 Kings 21:3). Due to Naomi's poverty, the land would be sold. However, the family could redeem it through a kinsman who would purchase the land, and it would not be lost. When this occurred through Boaz's fulfilled promise, all the problems in chapter one were resolved. God specializes in resolving life's most significant problems. God sent humanity's Redeemer, Jesus Christ, years later to another young family in the lineage of King David. When Jesus died for the world's sins, He redeemed all that people had lost from the original fall (Gen. 3). The Lord secured humanity's eternity so that all who believe in Him might be saved under the shelter of His wings. Jesus is our Kinsman-Redeemer.



3:8 At midnight, Boaz was startled, turned over, and there lying at his feet was a woman! **9** So he asked, “Who are you?” “I am Ruth, **your servant,**” **A** she replied. “Take me **under your wing,** **B** for you are a **family redeemer.**” **C** **10** Then he said, “May the LORD bless you, my daughter. You have shown more **kindness** **D** now than before, because you have not pursued younger men, whether rich or poor. **11** Now don’t be afraid, my daughter. I will do for you whatever you say, since all the people in my town know that you are a woman of noble character. **12** Yes, it is true that I am a family redeemer, but there is a redeemer **closer than I am.** **E** **13** Stay here tonight, and in the morning, if he wants to redeem you, that’s good. Let him redeem you. But if he doesn’t want to redeem you, as the LORD lives, I will. Now lie down until morning.” [. . .] **4:13** **Boaz took Ruth** **F** and she became his wife. He slept with her, and the LORD **granted conception** **G** to her, and she gave birth to a son. **14** The women said to Naomi, “Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you without a family redeemer today. May his name become well known in Israel. **15** He will renew your life and sustain you in your old age. Indeed, your daughter-in-law, who loves you and is **better to you than seven sons,** **H** has given birth to him.” **16** Naomi took the child, placed him on her lap, and became a mother to him. **17** The neighbor women said, “A son has been born to Naomi,” and they named him **Obed.** **I** He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.

A. The Hebrew wording describes a position of service and humility.

B. Boaz had used the “wings” imagery in his earlier blessing of Ruth (2:12). Now, she was seeking his shelter.

C. The kinsman-redeemer was a close relative who could continue a family line through levirate marriage.

D. The Hebrew word *hesed* describes loyalty, faithfulness, and goodness. Often used of God, Ruth was known for displaying *hesed* toward Naomi. Now, Boaz experienced this kindness.

E. One relative was closer to Elimelech than Boaz. Still, whether this man became the redeemer or not, Boaz vowed (“as the LORD lives”) that Ruth and Naomi would be secure (v. 13).

F. The closer relative declined to marry Ruth and allowed Boaz to become her redeemer.

G. Ruth had not been able to conceive with Naomi’s son, Mahlon. But God, in His providence, gave her a son with Boaz.

H. In a culture where male offspring were highly prized, the women emphasized Ruth’s profound impact on Naomi’s life.

I. Obed became the grandfather of King David and an ancestor of the Messiah (Matt. 1:5-6).

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Future Unclear

(Ruth 3:8-10)

When believers face times of uncertainty, we will have to step out in faith.

- **Ruth's actions were risky and required trust. When have you had to take a step of faith that felt uncertain? What was the outcome?**

2. Future Secured

(Ruth 3:11-13)

We can turn to God with our fears and trust Him to respond.

- **What might keep us from trusting God with our fears?**

3. Future Redeemed

(Ruth 4:13-17)

We can be assured of God's continual care for us since He demonstrated it in His redemptive plan.

- **In what ways does God's redemptive work change the way you live daily and give you confidence for the future?**
- **How do you feel knowing that God is at work in every generation?**

Apply the Text

- **Who in your small group has been walking through circumstances that are causing anxiety? How can your group encourage them to trust in the Lord? How can you communicate this week God's redemptive love as their source of strength?**

KEY DOCTRINE:

God the Son

In His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. (See Romans 5:6-10; Ephesians 1:7.)

BIBLE SKILL:

Create a compare/contrast chart to study a passage.

In ancient Israel, the kinsman-redeemer pointed to the coming Messiah. Review these passages from Ruth again and consider how Boaz served as an illustration for what Jesus would do centuries later. Record your comparisons on the chart below:

Boaz as Redeemer	Jesus as Redeemer
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DAILY EXPLORATION



Day 1: Ruth 3:8

Pay attention to the evidence that Ruth and Boaz both acted honorably and with integrity.

Once Naomi learned that Ruth had been gleaning in the fields of Boaz, she decided to take advantage of their present circumstances and see if God’s provision of food extended to the provision of a husband for Ruth. She initiated a plan that would give the most advantageous route to Boaz claiming the right of kinsman-redeemer.

The scenario leading to Boaz’s discovery of Ruth at his feet has given rise to various interpretations. We must reject any interpretation that suggests Naomi wanted Ruth to act seductively. There are many reasons why this viewpoint must be rejected. First, Naomi was viewed by the people in Bethlehem as an honorable woman. She would not have encouraged Ruth to act shamefully. Second, Ruth’s clothing was not indicative of a prostitute’s dress. Common outer garments were used as blankets, but Ruth’s outer garment was ornamental since Naomi told her to “wear your best clothes” (v. 3). Third, Ruth laid at Boaz’s feet but did not act aggressively toward him. Fourth, Boaz’s response to Ruth showed his integrity by not taking advantage of her at the moment. Rather, he complimented her kindness demonstrated in her purity and showed appreciation for her nobility.

Ruth and Boaz both demonstrated integrity. What does this teach you about maintaining integrity when faced with surprising or challenging situations?



Day 2: Ruth 3:9-10

Consider how Ruth stepped out in faith.

Ruth humbled herself but boldly requested Boaz to take her under his wing as their “family redeemer.” Her expression, “Take me under your wing,” was a beautiful way to express a redeemer’s action. Psalm 91:4 says, “He will cover you with his feathers; you will take refuge under his wings. His faithfulness will be a protective shield.” In a world filled with danger, uncertainty, and insecurity, the Lord offers refuge under His wings to all who trust Him.

Ruth’s request for Boaz to pursue the role of family redeemer did not go unheard or ignored. He understood the situation well and expressed his delight in Ruth’s trusting him to be her husband. The circumstance is certainly untraditional and unconventional for modern readers, but the unfolding story of God’s redemption shows how God’s ways are not ours (Isa. 55:8).

The way the Lord works might seem mysterious, but when God’s people walk in integrity, focused on bringing God glory, His plans unfold beautifully. Naomi sent Ruth to the threshing floor in hope that God would provide (vv. 2-4). Ruth went to the threshing floor in faith, not knowing how God would work. Boaz responded in love to the inward beauty of Ruth’s character.

In what areas of your life do you need to seek God’s covering and provision?



Day 3: Ruth 3:11-13

Focus on how Boaz demonstrated his integrity.

Boaz assured Ruth of his willingness to help her. He commended her for her noble character, which all the people in Bethlehem had witnessed. Ruth's story impacted everyone who heard it. She had followed Naomi to a strange land with an uncertain future out of love for her mother-in-law. Now, Ruth acted with virtue in her approach before Boaz. He could not resist giving her whatever was in her heart.

Boaz knew he was not the closest redeemer for Ruth and explained the circumstances to her. A closer family redeemer had the right to their land and Ruth. How would Ruth respond to this new reality? Boaz's tenderness toward her calmed her heart. He promised Ruth, "But if he doesn't want to redeem you, as the LORD lives, I will."

With her future secured, Ruth could sleep in peace, and peace was what Boaz offered by telling her to "lie down until morning." Nothing gives you peace like knowing you are secure in God's promises. Nothing allows you to truly rest like knowing you are safe in God's gracious care.

How do you find rest when you cannot control the outcome?



Day 4: Ruth 4:13-16

Notice how Naomi's life changed since she arrived in Bethlehem.

Boaz fulfilled his promise to find the closer family redeemer. He went to the city gate where men would conduct business in the presence of witnesses and under the approval of the city elders. When Boaz confronted his family member, he explained the details of the transaction, which included Elimelech's land. When Boaz told him that the deal hinged on taking Ruth as his wife, he refused. The man stated that acceptance would have ruined his inheritance. The reasons could have been the apparent awkwardness of bringing another woman into his home, and he could have had grown sons already enjoying the inheritance of their lands. Boaz called the witnesses to hear his commitment. They agreed and blessed Boaz. Shortly afterward, he fulfilled his promise to be Ruth's kinsman-redeemer. They married, and the Lord granted her a son.

The people recognized God's favor over Naomi's family, who provided them with a "family redeemer." As Naomi entered Bethlehem months earlier, she arrived a bitter and broken woman (1:20-21). Now, she held a grandson. Resting in her arms was the providential love of God. Earlier, Naomi could only see the unfavorable circumstances of her life. But God's timing was perfect. Even when we cannot understand God's ways, we can rest in His love. God works "all things together for the good of those who love him, who are called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

How does this passage remind you that God's plans often exceed your expectations?



Day 5: Ruth 4:17

Compare Ruth 4:17 to Matthew 1:5-6,16.

Neighboring women throughout Bethlehem gathered to celebrate with Ruth, Boaz, and Naomi the fulfillment of their family redeemer. Mahlon's name and his descendants would continue. Jewish history would record and speak the names of Ruth, Boaz, and Naomi. Throughout church history, their story would be read and retold.

Naomi's family redeemer secured her future, and the generations who followed would know God's providential care. Ruth and Boaz's son, Obed, would become the father of Jesse and the grandfather to David. Ultimately, his family line would extend to "Jesus, who is called the Messiah" (Matt. 1:5-6,16).

Throughout Scripture, God uses men and women from every walk of life to fulfill His sovereign plan. Through His redeeming love, He settles our fears and replaces our shame with His grace. The Lord reminds us that He has not abandoned us but has shown compassion as our Redeemer (Isa. 54:4-8).

Ruth's story is every person's story. God's love reaches the religious and the irreligious. His grace covers every sin and secures the eternal future of each one who trusts in Jesus. Jesus is the ultimate Kinsman-Redeemer.

In what ways does God's redemptive work change the way you live daily and give you confidence for the future?

APPLY THE TEXT

We constantly face moments in life where our faith is tested and our fears dominate our emotions. How can knowing God's providential care defeat fear's domination and renew your faith so you experience God's peace and joy through seasons of uncertainty?

JOURNAL



LEADER HELPS

Using the Daily Discipleship Guide to Lead a Bible Study Group

The *Daily Discipleship Guide* was created for the purpose of building disciples. As the leader of the group, you play a major role. You can build disciples through the group Bible study time, encouraging daily Bible engagement, facilitating smaller groups, and apprenticing future leaders.

Building Disciples through the Group Time

Leading the group Bible study time is the most direct way you will build disciples. Each week, you will introduce the group to the Bible passage, examine the key message in that passage, challenge the group to act on that passage, and encourage them to reflect more deeply in the week that follows. Doing so requires preparation. Here is a way to prepare that gives you adequate time to study the lesson and will make the session fresh in your own life.

Early in the Week (Sunday or Monday)

- Ask God to open your mind and heart to His Word as you study.
- Read the Bible passage for the coming session, and review Understand the Context and Key Words.
- If a QR code is available in the Leader Helps, scan it to gain additional information on what's found in the passage.

Through the Week

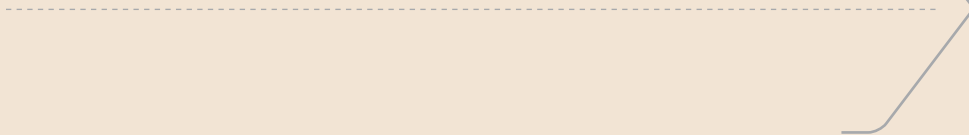
- Ask God to use the Daily Explorations to help you understand and apply the lesson to your life.
- Complete the Daily Exploration activities in the days leading up to the group time.
- Meet with a group of three to four other teachers to share and pray for each other. Use Talk It Out to start your conversation.
- Pay careful attention to the Apply the Text sections for that session, looking for ways you need to apply the Bible in your own life.
- Start gathering items you may use in the group time.

The Day before Group Study Time

- Review the group plan in the back of the *Daily Discipleship Guide*.
- Review the first four pages of the *Daily Discipleship Guide* for that session and the commentary provided in the Leader Helps for that session.
- Review your responses and notes from the completed Daily Explorations.
- Listen to the weekly podcast at goExploreTheBible.com/Adults-Training.
- Adjust the plan to fit the needs of your group.
Note: You can create custom plans using the DOC file provided in the Digital Download for the Leader Pack—it's the same content printed in the Leader Helps.
- Consult *QuickSource* for additional insights and ideas.
- Review the weekly Adult Extra idea on the Explore the Bible blog (goExploreTheBible.com/LeaderExtras).
- Consult the *Explore the Bible Adult Commentary* for additional insight.
- Pull needed posters from the *Explore the Bible: Leader Pack* (or create your own using Visual Ideas on pages 160–161).
- Make sure you have all your resources gathered including extra copies of the *Daily Discipleship Guide* for guests.

The Day of the Group Study Time

- Arrive early. The group time begins when the first person arrives so make sure that is you.
- Pray for the study and the group.
- Adjust the room as needed.
- Lead the study, adjusting as you go.



After the Group Study Time

- Consider the After the Session idea at the end of the group plans.
- Contact the group, encouraging them to complete the Daily Exploration section and sharing gathered prayer requests and other appropriate information.
- Record insights gained about teaching, individuals in the group, and Scripture.
- Pray for specific needs of people in the group.
- Do it all again, asking God to open you mind and heart to His Word this week.

Building Disciples by Encouraging Daily Bible Engagement

Here are some ways to encourage your group to engage with the Bible daily.

- **VISIT THEM.** Deliver a copy of the Daily Discipleship Guide to every person in your group.
- **ASK THEM.** That seems simple, but the simple is not always easy. Learn to comfortably ask if group members are studying the Bible. You may want to use a statement instead of a question, such as, “I hope you took a look at the Day 3 activity for this week.” It’s a question disguised as a statement, so it’s not as threatening.
- **TELL THEM.** Let them know that you are using the Daily Exploration section as well. Set the standard.
- **SHOW THEM.** Point to the Daily Exploration section at the conclusion of the group study. From time to time, demonstrate how to use the section, guiding them through Day 1 as a group.
- **INVITE THEM.** Call on pre-enlisted volunteers to share with the group what they are learning and how they are using the Daily Exploration section.

As teachers, we have taken on the responsibility of encouraging everyone on our ministry list (class roll, membership list, etc.) to engage daily in Bible study. We can’t make them do it, but we can provide them with a tool and encourage them to use it.

Building Disciples through Smaller Groups

Talk It Out is designed for smaller groups of three to four people to meet weekly. The goal of the smaller groups is simple: holding ourselves and others accountable for living a Christ-honoring life.

Create smaller groups:

- Explain the importance of the smaller groups, emphasizing the goal.
 - Allow the group to form their own initial groups of three by gender (men's smaller groups and women's smaller groups). This tends to work better than assigning groups.
 - Allow the smaller groups to add one person from the names on the ministry list of people who are not present.
 - You may want to encourage the groups to form based on neighborhoods or proximity to work.
 - Make sure some of the groups have extra space for new people and guests.
 - As the Bible study group grows, you may need to reorganize the smaller groups, but try not to regroup too often so that trust can be built within each smaller group.
-

Support the smaller groups:

- Provide opportunities for the members of the smaller groups to pray with each other during the group time.
 - Make study assignments in the weekly group time based on the smaller groups.
 - Pre-enlist a volunteer to share with the larger group how participation in the smaller group is impacting his or her life.
 - Periodically organize fellowship events built around the smaller groups. The smaller groups could be the basis for teams during the event.
-

Be in a smaller group:

- Meet with two or three other Bible study leaders as part of your weekly preparation.
- Be part of a smaller group within your class.
- Host a smaller group for guests and new group members.

Building Disciples by Apprenticing Other Leaders

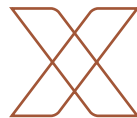
Starting new groups is critical to the life of your church and the lives of the individuals in your group. People in your group need to be challenged to take on a greater role in your church. Providing the opportunity to do so helps them grow and removes the largest barrier to starting new Bible study groups—finding a leader. You can make a difference in the growth of individuals and in the future growth of your church by apprenticing potential group leaders. Here’s how you can use the *Daily Discipleship Guide* to make this happen.

- **STEP 1:** Prior to group time, ask a potential leader to follow along in the Leader Helps for that session as you lead the group. Tell him or her to note what you did and what you adjusted. You’re just coaching your apprentice to use the book he or she has in a different way.
- **STEP 2:** After that group experience, spend time with the group member going over what you did and how you adjusted the leader material for the group.
- **STEP 3:** Invite him or her to do this again in a few weeks.
- **STEP 4:** Ask him or her to lead a group time or part of one using the suggestions in the Leader Helps for that session. You may be away that week, or you can simply observe as a group member. Offer to help him or her prepare if needed.
- **STEP 5:** As your apprentice gains confidence, allow him or her to teach more in the near future.
- **STEP 6:** As a need for a new group surfaces, prepare to move on to lead the new group, with the apprentice becoming the leader of the current group (which tends to work best), or commission the apprentice and a few others from the group to start a new group.
- **STEP 7:** Do it all again.

Not everyone in the group will become a Bible study leader. For those who do, you can become a mentor to potential leaders, extending your teaching ministry and demonstrating discipleship.

Strong and Courageous

Session 1 • Joshua 1:1-11,16-18



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 1** (*Map: The Conquest of Canaan*) and **Pack Item 3** (*Poster: Key Characters in Joshua, Judges, Ruth*). Make copies of **Pack Item 9** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in Joshua, Judges, Ruth*). Gather pens and index cards for the “Challenge” activity.

INTRODUCE: Invite the group to read the opening paragraph on page 13.

ASK: What makes a person trustworthy? (p. 13)

SHARE: Point out that trust is earned. Note that as people demonstrate trustworthiness, it becomes easier to trust them. Highlight Joshua on **Pack Item 3** (*Poster: Key Characters in Joshua, Judges, Ruth*) and summarize this content from **Understand the Context** (p. 13):

- “When God called Joshua to be Moses’s replacement, humanly speaking, Joshua had every reason to be intimidated. He had witnessed many of the things God did through Moses. However, as with Moses, God had prepared Joshua for his task. . . . God’s assignment for Joshua would be different in nature from what Moses’s assignment had

been. Nonetheless, as with Moses, God providentially prepared Joshua for the task before him. Therefore, there was every reason for Joshua to trust the Lord and be strong and courageous.”

ASK: What might have been going through Joshua’s mind when God installed him as the leader after Moses?

TRANSITION: *Today’s study examines the transition from Moses’s leadership to Joshua’s leadership. But while the human leadership had changed, God had not.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Joshua 1:1-5 as the group listens for God’s promise to Joshua.

RECAP: Note that Moses had not been allowed to enter the promised land because of his sin. Provide more information about Israel’s new leader, Joshua:

- **(1:1)** *Joshua means “Yahweh is salvation.” Moses changed his assistant’s name from Hoshea (“Save!”) to Joshua (“the Lord is salvation,” Num. 13:16). In Greek, Joshua is the same word as the name “Jesus.” Joshua has a rather long history. He led Israel to victory over the Amalekites (Ex. 17). He alone accompanied Moses on*

the holy mountain (24:13-14). As one of the twelve spies, Joshua along with Caleb urged Israel to obey God and enter the land (Num. 14:5-9).

EXPLAIN: Share that God had promised a home for His people in the days of Abraham. Joshua's first order of business, as the new leader of the Israelites, was to prepare them to move into the promised land. Highlight the borders of the promised land using **Pack Item 1** (*Map: The Conquest of Canaan*). Emphasize God's faithfulness in keeping His promises to His people.

ASK: How have you experienced God's faithfulness? (p. 15)

TRANSITION: *God's promise of land also included the promise of His presence with Joshua and the Israelites.*

READ: Call for a volunteer to read Joshua 1:6-11 as adults consider why believers don't have to be afraid when following God.

SHARE: Highlight "strong and courageous" in verse 6. Note that the phrase appears three times in Joshua 1. Emphasize the importance of Joshua demonstrating these qualities.

- **(1:6)** Israel would need to see Joshua's strength and courage as an example to follow in the face of what would appear to be insurmountable challenges in the land of Canaan. He would be the one who would distribute the land to the people as their inheritance. The mandate to show strength and courage occurs in verses 6, 7, and 9. The number three in biblical thought often emphasized completion. The Lord required Joshua's total obedience.

DISCUSS: Note how God connected strength and courage to full obedience to His Word in verses 7-9. Allow volunteers to describe what it means to meditate on God's Word and to suggest practical ways to meditate on Scripture each day.

ASK: How does God's Word provide courage and direction for our lives? What role does His Word play in our definition of success? (p. 15)

MEMORIZE: Point out that Joshua 1:8 serves as the memory verse for this session. Lead adults to read aloud the verse three times. Encourage them to memorize it this week.

TRANSITION: *Responding to God's challenge, Joshua prepared the people to move into the promised land.*

READ: Read Joshua 1:16-18 as adults identify key ideas in the Israelites' words to Joshua.

EXPLAIN: Point out that the commitment voiced by the tribes east of the Jordan River was shared by the entire nation. Note that to emphasize the significance of their commitment, the tribes promised to hold themselves accountable, even to the point of putting rebels to death.

- **(1:18)** The Israelites' assertion to Joshua that anyone who rebels against your order . . . will be put to death stressed the degree of their devotion. They were willing to hold themselves accountable for disobedience. The military situation in which the Israelites were engaged under Joshua's command required strict discipline and

thus severe punishment for rebellion. The death sentence was carried out in Joshua 7:24-26. At the conquest of Jericho, Achan took some spoil that belonged to the Lord. When God revealed Achan's sin, Joshua commanded the man's entire family and his possessions be destroyed.

ASK: How does a shared commitment to God's purposes encourage other people? (p. 15)

DISCUSS: Lead the group to discuss how believers, like the Israelites, often make promises to God but fail to keep them. Discuss the difference between intent and action. Emphasize the importance of holding one another accountable.

PRAY: Joshua's courage was grounded in the assurance of God's trustworthiness. This came from the words of his people, but also from the Word of God. Review Joshua 1:8. Encourage adults to scan the QR code for the **Explore the Bible Prayer Guide** on page 15 and follow the prompts to pray Joshua 1:8 back to God.

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from this week's Bible passage:

- We can find courage in the truth that God keeps His promises.
- We can discern God's best for our lives by studying His Word.
- We can encourage the kingdom work of others by supporting them and partnering with them.

SHARE: Remind adults that while this session focused on God's promises to Joshua thousands of years ago, we serve the same God today. Emphasize that the God who kept His promises to Moses and Joshua still keeps His promises today.

DISCUSS: Guide the group to discuss the **Apply the Text** activity on page 15. Lead a brief discussion of specific promises found in Scripture and the impact those promises can have on our lives as Christ followers.

PRAY: Distribute index cards and pens. Direct adults to record an area in which they need strength and courage on one side of the card. As they are working, play the song "Promises" by Maverick City Music. On the other side of the card, encourage them to write a prayer related to what they wrote on the front of the card. Give them a moment of silent prayer. Challenge them to continue using **Pack Item 9** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in Joshua, Judges, Ruth*) to pray through these issues this week.

AFTER THE SESSION

Email the group to let them know that you are praying for them to stand strong and courageous for God this week. Share one of your favorite promises from God and ask them to share one of their favorite promises from Scripture. Direct them to reflect on and respond to the **Apply the Text** questions on page 19. Encourage them to suggest ways the group can partner with other believers in the days ahead.

Amazing Grace

Session 2 • Joshua 2:4-21



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outlines of Joshua, Judges, Ruth*) and **Pack Item 3** (*Poster: Key Characters in Joshua, Judges, Ruth*) on a focal wall.

INTRODUCE: Direct a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 21. Encourage adults to suggest other imperfect Bible characters used by God to fulfill His plans.

ASK: Why does God so often use unlikely, imperfect people to accomplish His purposes? (p. 21)

REVIEW: Direct attention to “Preparation for Possessing the Land” on **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outlines of Joshua, Judges, Ruth*). Share that this week’s session examines a step Joshua took to get the people ready to cross the Jordan River. Summarize this content from **Understand the Context** (p. 21):

- “Joshua sent two spies to scout the area so they could bring him a report on what his troops should expect when they went up against it. . . . [Jericho’s] location was important because several routes that led west into the central hill country of Canaan emanated from the city. Therefore, it was a key junction for those

traveling east. . . . Rahab and her family were citizens of Jericho . . . [and] her house was part of the outer fortifications located on the city wall.”

TRANSITION: *Rahab was a prostitute. But like other imperfect people—including each of us—God was able to move in her life and use her to make a difference for His kingdom.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: As a volunteer reads **Joshua 2:4-7**, instruct the group to listen for evidence of Rahab’s bravery.

DISCUSS: Direct attention to **Pack Item 3** (*Poster: Key Characters in Joshua, Judges, Ruth*) and review the description of Rahab. Discuss ways Rahab demonstrated courage in these verses.

ASK: What is the relationship between boldness and faith? (p. 23)

SAY: *The spies were not immoral for visiting Rahab’s house. Her home would have been similar to a tavern or inn, a place where people of the town would gather. As result, it was a place where the spies could learn a lot about Jericho and its vulnerabilities.*

SHARE: Highlight Rahab’s actions and why the roof was an effective hiding place:

- **(2:6)** *In Old Testament times, people used flax fibers to make linen. When flax matured at the end of the rainy season, it was dried in the sun, its fibers separated, then spun. The flat roofs on houses in ancient Canaan enabled people to expose things to the sun—like fruit that needed to ripen and wet grain and laundry that needed drying. The flat roofs also allowed people to sleep on them when it was too hot indoors and offered additional storage space.*

PRAY: Affirm that Rahab stepped out of her comfort zone to help the Israelite spies. Allow volunteers to share where they need prayer related to stepping out of their comfort zone in faith. Take a moment to pray for boldness to follow God’s leading.

TRANSITION: *Scripture does not justify Rahab’s lying any more than it justifies her life as a prostitute. However, in His omnipotence, the Lord could save the spies any way He chose. As we will see, what is commended in Scripture is Rahab’s faith in God.*

READ: Call for a volunteer to read Joshua 2:8-13 as the group identifies how God’s works affected the people of Jericho and influenced Rahab.

EXPLAIN: Highlight Rahab’s confession of God in these verses. Share that she knew about the way God had parted the Red Sea decades earlier. And she knew about Israel’s more recent victories over Sihon and Og. As a result, she embraced Israel’s God as the one, true God. Highlight also the meaning of “lost heart”:

- **(2:11)** *The Hebrews associated the heart with the emotions, thought, and human will, and the phrase “we lost heart” can mean “our hearts melted.” Losing heart means the weakening of morale.*
- **(2:11)** *The pinnacle of verse 11 is Rahab’s confession of faith: “The Lord your God is God in heaven above and on earth below.” This statement on the lips of a pagan worshiper is extraordinary because she affirmed God’s reign over all creation and that the idols her people worshiped were not true gods.*

EXPLAIN: Point out that Rahab’s request for kindness was rooted in her demonstration of kindness. Note that this was her attempt to live out her faith in a meaningful way.

ASK: How should our beliefs about God impact the way we treat others? (p. 23)

READ: Call for the group to read Joshua 2:14-16 silently and to look for the offer made to Rahab by the two spies.

DISCUSS: Encourage adults to share any words, phrases, or ideas that stuck out to them as they read verses 14-16. Encourage them to summarize the spies’ promise to Rahab. Lead a brief discussion on why they would pledge their own lives. Note that their response included language similar to Rahab’s request.

RECAP: To provide more context, summarize this information related to Rahab’s house:

- **(2:15)** *Rahab’s home was probably built along a casemate wall. A casemate wall was made of two parallel rock walls with a*

gap of a meter or two in between. In times of warfare that gap could be filled with rock rubble so that the enemies' battering ram, even if it broke through the outer wall, would lose momentum as it hit the softer rubble between the outer and inner walls. Rahab's home shared a common wall with the city wall itself.

ASK: How does faith in God require obedient action? (p. 23)

TRANSITION: *Rahab and the spies had come to trust one another. What's more, they trusted God and committed to protect one another in a way that would honor Him.*

READ: Call for a volunteer to read Joshua 2:17-21 as the group considers the conditions the spies placed on Rahab.

- **(2:18-20)** First, the spies told Rahab to tie a scarlet cord to the window through which they were escaping. This was to show the Israelites what household's inhabitants they were to spare in their assault. It is reminiscent of the blood that was placed on the doorframes of the Israelites and the spared lives of the Israelite firstborn in Egypt during the tenth plague. Second, she needed to bring her family into the house and make sure they stayed there. Third, if she should betray the spies by reporting their mission to the authorities, they would be released from the oath they made.

ASK: If you were Rahab, how would you feel about the spies' conditions? Why? (p. 23)

DISCUSS: What are some signs that remind us of God's grace in our lives? (p. 23)

SHARE: Emphasize that believers can trust God to work in their lives as they walk in faith before Him. Note that God used Rahab, an imperfect person, to accomplish His plans for His people. Affirm that He still uses imperfect people today.

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from this week's Bible passage:

- Following God often requires leaving one's comfort zone and stepping out in faith.
- We can be encouraged that God's acts will always demonstrate His character.
- Relying on God's grace leads to security, even in difficult times.
- We can be assured of God's work in our lives by regularly reflecting on what He has done in the past.

DISCUSS: Guide the group to discuss the **Apply the Text** questions on page 23.

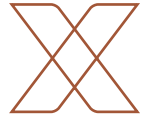
PRAY: Close in prayer, thanking God for His faithfulness to work in and through us. Thank Him especially for the grace received because of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.

AFTER THE SESSION

During the week, text Hebrews 11:31 to the group. Challenge them to consider how they are stepping out in faith or displaying faith in God this week.

Remembering God's Works

Session 3 • Joshua 3:14–4:9



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 1** (*Map: The Conquest of Canaan*). Make copies of **Pack Item 10** (*Handout: The Life of Joshua*) and **Pack Item 11** (*Handout: Memorial Stones*).

ASK: What are some prominent memorials you can think of? Why are they significant, and what impact do they have on people today? (p. 29)

READ: Direct a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 29. Affirm that the purpose of monuments is to remind us of what has happened in our past and to challenge us to look ahead to the future. Explain that today's session focuses on how Israel memorialized God's mighty works on their behalf as they set foot in the promised land.

CONTEXT: Summarize the miracle God provided for the people as they crossed the Jordan River:

- “At that time of year, the Jordan’s banks were overflowing. Nevertheless, when the priests stepped into the water, the waters receded, making a dry path for all of Israel to cross (3:6-17; 4:23). When every Israelite had completed crossing the Jordan, the Lord commanded Joshua to choose twelve men, one from each

tribe, to each take a stone from the riverbed.” (p. 29)

LOCATE: Direct attention to **Pack Item 1** (*Map: The Conquest of Canaan*). Highlight Gilgal on the map and share that this is where the men took the stones from the river. Point out that God commanded Joshua to use those stones to build a memorial at Gilgal.

TRANSITION: *We will dig deeper into these events in this session.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

REVIEW: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 10** (*Handout: The Life of Joshua*). Review Joshua’s role in Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Note that God called him to lead Israel in Joshua 1 and now we pick up on his first steps in leading the people across the Jordan River and into the promised land.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Joshua 3:14-17** as the group listens for the specific details to set up the crossing.

RECAP: Stress the significance of the timing of this river crossing:

- **(3:15)** *The comment that “the Jordan overflows its banks throughout the harvest season” enhances the miracle that follows. According to Jewish calendars,*

the crossing took place in the month of Abib or Nisan, which roughly corresponds to March and April on our calendar. The Lord had established Nisan as the first month of the Israelites' spiritual year when He established Passover (Ex. 12:1-2). This was also harvest season, a time when the Jordan River normally exceeded its flood stage.

REFLECT: On the board, write: *Nothing is impossible with God.* Discuss this phrase and its significance in these verses. Briefly compare this miracle to the Red Sea.

- **(3:14-17)** Similarities exist between the previous generation's crossing of the Red Sea and this generation's crossing of the Jordan. In both events the Lord miraculously separated waters and allowed His people to cross on dry ground. In both instances the waters "heaped up" (Ex. 15:8; "rising up in a mass," Josh. 3:16), as God's people overcame a tremendous obstacle. And the primary purpose of each crossing was to bring glory to God and to affirm the man God had chosen to lead Israel (Ex. 14:31; Josh. 3:7-13).



Acts of God

Learn more about the powerful acts of God experienced by the Israelites in the books of Joshua and Judges.

ASK: Why are barriers an important part of our spiritual journey? (p. 31) Discuss how the Jordan River presented a barrier to Israel reaching the promised land.

DISCUSS: Encourage adults to share if they have run a marathon or half marathon. Lead a brief discussion on the significance of mile markers and way points, especially to help people keep going.

READ: Call for a volunteer to read aloud Joshua 4:1-7, directing the group to listen for the marker God established.

EXAMINE: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 11** (*Handout: Memorial Stones*). Allow adults time to scan the article. Lead a brief discussion of the significance of the markers. Emphasize the purpose of God's commands in these verses:

- **(4:6-7)** *The stones served as "a sign" for the current generation and their descendants. The Hebrew term for sign can signify an unusual event. These particular stones would direct people back to God's miraculous work in that spot. The Lord intended these stones to elicit questions about spiritual matters. They also were "a memorial." The Hebrew term is derived from "to remember." They functioned as a visual reminder of the dramatic way the Lord had helped His people. By reminding Israel of God's work, the stones pointed future generations toward a deeper faith in Him.*

ASK: What are some milestones that could remind people of God's work in their lives? (p. 31)

TRANSITION: *After the people had crossed over the river on dry ground and collected the stones, it was time to build the monument.*

READ: Call for the group to read silently Joshua 4:8-9, looking for how many monuments were built and where.

EXPLAIN: Encourage adults to share physical monuments or markers they may currently have around their home. Allow volunteers to share about their items and why they are significant. Lead the group to review the information about the monument set up in verse 8.

DISCUSS: Read verse 9 aloud again. Lead a brief discussion on why it would be important for the Israelites to know the monument was still there. Talk about how events in our lives as believers can serve as “memorials” to God’s work in our lives.

ASK: How can previous experiences with God strengthen a person’s faith? How can we pass on our faith stories to future generations? (p. 31) Record suggestions about sharing with future generations on the board or a large sheet of paper. Emphasize the importance of recounting our personal faith stories for our children and grandchildren.

PRAY: Thank God for His activity in the lives of His people, asking Him to help each adult remember how much He does for them.

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from this week’s Bible passage:

- We can be sure that God never fails to provide perfectly for His people during their time of need.

- We should establish memorials in our lives that consistently remind us of God’s work on our behalf.
- God expects believers to remember and testify to what He has done for them.

REVIEW: Discuss the importance of spiritual memorials in our lives and how we can use them to reflect upon God’s work in our lives. Encourage adults to respond to the **Apply the Text** activity on page 31. Remind them that the focus should remain on giving God the glory for what He has done. Urge them to share His works with someone else during the week ahead.

PRAY: Close in prayer, thanking God for His faithful work in the lives of believers and asking Him to remind each individual of His work in their lives and the lives of those around them.

AFTER THE SESSION

Reinforce the session by texting or emailing the group. Share a photo of one of your spiritual markers or memorials. Describe what it is and why it is significant. Encourage adults to share their own photos in the group message. Remind the group of the importance God places on remembering His work and sharing that work with others.

Winning Strategy

Session 4 • Joshua 6:12-25



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 1** (*Map: The Conquest of Canaan*) on a focal wall. Make copies of **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Joshua, Judges, Ruth Time Line*) and **Pack Item 12** (*Handout: Winning Strategy*).

READ: Enlist a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 37.

ASK: What is involved in learning to trust someone? (p. 37)

SHARE: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 8** (*Handout: Joshua, Judges, Ruth Time Line*) and review Israel's shift from Moses to Joshua. Note that around 1406 BC, Joshua led the people across the Jordan and toward Jericho.

TRANSITION: Show adults the location of Jericho on **Pack Item 1** (*Map: The Conquest of Canaan*). Explain that Joshua was an experienced military leader, but today's session reveals his willingness to surrender his ideas to the plans and strategies of God.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Ask adults to read Joshua 6:12-14 silently, underlining words and phrases that stick out to them. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share what they marked and why.

EXPLAIN: Review the instructions God gave Joshua in verses 1-5. Discuss what the people might have thought about this plan.

- God's plan to capture Jericho was simple, yet unorthodox. The army would march around the city once a day for six days. On the seventh day, they would circle Jericho seven times, blow their trumpets made of rams' horns, scream loudly, and watch God bring down the city's massive walls (Josh. 6:1-5).

ASK: Have you ever been given an instruction or command that didn't make sense in the moment? What happened?

ASK: How do God's unusual instructions test our faith? (p. 39)

TRANSITION: *God was preparing His people to enter the promised land with this test. The seventh day offered a different kind of test.*

READ: Call for a volunteer to read aloud Joshua 6:15-19, directing the group to listen for God's instructions for victory.

SHARE: Highlight how the seventh day differed from the previous six days for Joshua and the Israelite army.

ASK: Why did God set the treasures of Jericho apart for Himself? (p. 39)

SHARE: *God is the Owner and Provider of everything. He led Israel into the promised land. It all belonged to Him, so it was not unkind or unfair for Him to claim the spoils of war for Himself.*

REFLECT: Note that Rahab and her family were exceptions to God’s ban. Encourage adults to share how God’s actions toward her reveal His faithfulness—and how it can help us learn to trust Him more.

TRANSITION: *God had told them what He was going to do. Now, it was time to see the fulfillment of His plan.*

READ: Call for the group to read Joshua 6:20-21 silently, considering how the Israelites would have felt as they carried out God’s commands.

RECAP: Review the events recorded in verses 20-21. Share the following:

- **(6:20-21)** The inspired writer only briefly recorded the great miracle of the falling walls of Jericho at the end of verse 20. However, this short description coincides with the tone of the book of Joshua. In short, God would fight Israel’s battles and bring victory through His unmatched power. In response, His people were called to total obedience, marked by an unwavering trust in Him.

SHARE: Highlight two primary points from these verses, emphasizing the connection between absolute obedience and God’s provision and protection in our lives.

- The people obeyed God completely, even when it didn’t make sense.

- God did the work as the Israelites watched Him fight their battle.

ASK: What potential victory is God asking you to trust Him to provide? (p. 39)

PRAY: Note that God did something that only He could do—and that they trusted Him enough to make it happen. Review Joshua 6:20 and share that this is the memory verse for this session.

READ: Enlist a volunteer to read Joshua 6:22-25, instructing the group to discover a promise fulfilled.

SHARE: Highlight Joshua’s actions toward Rahab and her family. Summarize the following to provide additional insights into God’s grace:

- **(6:25)** Verse 25 indicates that once they completed the necessary purity rituals, Rahab’s family members were received into the Israelite congregation. By her faith, Rahab experienced the Lord’s mercy. She also became a part of the Lord’s chosen nation and the lineage of Christ. Her story provides a picture of what God still does for people, rescuing them from destruction and placing them within His family by faith.

DISCUSS: Encourage adults to read through the verses again and to identify how God dealt with the rest of Jericho’s people and their possessions. Use the information below to facilitate a brief discussion on why the Israelites burned Jericho and put its precious metals in the Lord’s treasury.

- **(6:24)** The Hebrew verb translated “burned” always denotes literal burning

and often designates the resulting destruction. As commanded (v. 19), Israel placed “the silver and gold . . . bronze and iron into the treasury of the Lord’s house.” The conquered people and possessions were placed under the ban, meaning objects and people were given to the Lord, or they were destroyed. Although “Lord’s house” usually refers to the temple, it refers to the tabernacle in this context since Israel had not yet built a temple.

ASK: What victories does God promise His people today? (p. 39)

CHALLENGE: *The God who faithfully delivered Jericho to Israel and faithfully protected Rahab and her family is the same God we serve. And He still works to provide for His people and to protect them. Consider areas in your life where you need to see God move. Determine how you can trust Him the way Israel and Rahab trusted Him.*

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from this week’s Bible passage:

- We should obey God’s directions, even when they don’t make sense.
- We experience victory in life when we obey God completely.
- We can trust God to do what only He can do.
- We can live in victory by trusting in God’s promises.

APPLY: Encourage the group to look for ways to express trust in God this week. Distribute copies of **Pack Item 12** (*Handout: Winning Strategy*). Direct them to record at least one situation they are praying about in the first column of the handout. Challenge them to continue praying through that issue during the week and to fill out the other spaces for that issue as God reveals His plans to them. Suggest that they continue using this handout to address other areas where God is moving in their lives.

DISCUSS: Guide the group to discuss the **Apply the Text** activity on page 39. Ask: **How can remembering what God has done in the past encourage you to trust Him now?**

CHALLENGE: Urge adults to consult the **Explore the Bible Prayer Guide** (QR code on page 15) for suggestions on how to pray these verses back to God.

AFTER THE SESSION

Reinforce the session by texting or emailing the group a link to the VeggieTales song, “Keep Walking” from *Josh and the Big Wall*. Include this reminder: *Keep walking and trusting in God—because God gives His people victory when they trust and obey Him.* Encourage adults to read and reflect on the **Apply the Text** questions on page 43.

Sin Revealed

Session 5 • Joshua 7:10-23



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 1** (*Map: The Conquest of Canaan*) and **Pack Item 3** (*Poster: Key Characters in Joshua, Judges, Ruth*) on a focal wall. Make copies of **Pack Item 10** (*Handout: The Life of Joshua*).

DISCUSS: What should be a person's motivation to confess sin and seek forgiveness? (p. 45)

READ: Discuss responses, then read the opening paragraph on page 45.

REVIEW: Show adults the locations of Jericho and Ai on **Pack Item 1** (*Map: The Conquest of Canaan*). Remind them of the incredible victory God gave the Israelites over Jericho in Joshua 6 because they obeyed Him. Note that today's session reveals what can happen when disobedience creeps in. Summarize this content from **Understand the Context** (p. 45):

- “After the account of the fall of Jericho in Joshua 6, chapters 7–12 summarize the rest of the conquest of Canaan. Joshua 7 reveals that an Israelite sinned against God when the Lord brought down the walls of Jericho. When Achan saw some of the items that were to be set apart for the Lord, he coveted them and took them

for himself. Achan's sin resulted in Israel's initial defeat at Ai. Only when Achan was confronted and his sin dealt with could Israel move on. Joshua 8 describes how God turned away from His anger and handed over the city of Ai to the Israelites.”

TRANSITION: *It is important for us to understand our personal relationship with God in the context of being a part of the people of God. Our actions affect others, often in ways we never expect.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

RESPOND: Write the following on the board or a large sheet of paper: *Our actions impact others, both positively and negatively.* Lead the group to list some personal examples of this from their lives.

CONTEXT: Distribute **Pack Item 10** (*Handout: The Life of Joshua*). Highlight Joshua dealing with Achan in Joshua 7. Direct attention to **Pack Item 3** (*Poster: Key Characters in Joshua, Judges, Ruth*) and review the description of Achan. Summarize Joshua 7:1-9 to highlight Achan's sin.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Joshua 7:10-15 as the group listens for what God instructed Joshua to do.

RECAP: Highlight God’s response to Joshua in these verses:

- **(7:11)** “Israel has sinned.” From God’s perspective, the entire nation, not just Achan, had sinned (see v. 1). As a result, the Israelites had to remove the sin and rebellion within the camp before the conquest could move forward. This is known as “corporate solidarity” and can be summed up this way: (1) the whole group is treated as a unit, (2) an individual can represent the unit, and (3) there is little or no distinction between the individual and the unit. Achan’s sin highlights the third concept. God told Joshua that Israel had sinned (v. 11). Yet Achan individually admitted his personal rebellion (v. 20).

ASK: Why is it important for us to recognize sin’s impact on us and our relationship with God? (p. 47) Discuss responses. Draw attention to the “Key Doctrine” on page 47. Affirm that our holy God takes sin seriously. Note that He would reveal just how seriously in the next verses.

READ: Call for a volunteer to read aloud Joshua 7:16-19 as the group listens to how Achan was identified.

HIGHLIGHT: Summarize the process through which God led Joshua to identify Achan:

- “Joshua had the tribes of Israel come forward as the Lord instructed. As he did, the Lord selected the tribe of Judah. Next, the Lord selected the Zerahite clan. Then, the Lord selected the family of Zabdi. Finally, Achan was selected. It was essential the people witnessed

that it was the Lord who was making the selections, just as He said He would in verses 13-15.” (p. 50)

DISCUSS: Lead the group to discuss how long this process may have taken and how Achan may have felt during the process. Lead the group to discuss the different ways Achan could have responded to Joshua in verse 19.

SAY: *Joshua spoke to Achan as a father. He challenged Achan to stop the charade and to come clean before God. His confession would bring glory to God, while hiding his sin was futile.*

ASK: What is repentance? (p. 47) Discuss responses, affirming that repentance involves confessing sin and turning away from it.

ASK: What might prevent one from confessing and seeking the Lord’s forgiveness? (p. 47)

READ: Call for a volunteer to read Joshua 7:20-23 as the group listens for what Achan took from Jericho. Lead the group to share their responses. Lead a brief discussion on how these verses underscore the seriousness of sin in our lives.

RECAP: Emphasize that sin always carries devastating effects, both for the ones who sin and for people around them.

- **(7:21)** Achan’s confession reveals a familiar progression of sin. First, he saw items placed under the ban, then he coveted them. Eventually, he took what he wanted. Forms of these same verbs appear in the record of Eve’s sin in Genesis 3:6. She also saw and took, while the term

for coveted is rendered “was desirable.” Also reminiscent of the garden is the effect. Adam and Eve’s sin affected the entire human race after them. Achan’s sin affected the entire nation of Israel.

ASK: Why is it important for us to view sin as seriously as God does? (p. 47)

SHARE: Write the following statement on the board or a large sheet of paper: *We honor God by repenting and confessing our sins to Him.* Point out that Achan had plenty of opportunities to confess, but he refused until he had no other choice. Remind adults that God wants us to deal with our sin quickly instead of trying to hide what we’ve done.

ENCOURAGE: Briefly walk adults through the Plan of Salvation on the inside front cover. Let them know that you will be available after the session to speak to anyone who wants to talk more about a personal relationship with Jesus or the confession of sin.

CONCLUDE: Emphasize that the story of Achan is an incredible reminder of how seriously God takes sin in our lives. He is a holy God who hates sin and what sin does in the lives of His people.

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from this week’s Bible passage:

- We should recognize that sin always dishonors God and negatively impacts our relationship with Him.
- We should acknowledge that God is always aware of our sins.

- We honor God by repenting and confessing our sins to Him.

DISCUSS: Guide the group to discuss the **Apply the Text** questions on page 47. Ask: **Why is your sin such a big deal to God?**

SHARE: Note again the Plan of Salvation on the inside front cover. Note that this plan emphasizes an awareness and repentance of sin. Share that this is a key step in establishing a personal relationship with God through Jesus. Remind the group that you will be available to talk about this after Bible study or during the week.

APPLY: Encourage adults to read and reflect on the **Apply the Text** questions from page 51 during the week. Point out the importance of encouraging one another to come clean before God in regard to sin.

PRAY: Lead the group to express to God an understanding that sin brings judgment—while also thanking God for His forgiveness of sin provided through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

AFTER THE SESSION

Follow-up this session by sending the group an email or text with this message: *Remember Achan? Your sins will find you out. Yet, God is gracious. Galatians 6:7.* Challenge them to examine their lives for any unconfessed sins that are bogging them down. Encourage them to reach out to trustworthy brothers and sisters in Christ when they feel overwhelmed by temptation and sin.

Unwavering Determination



Session 6 • Joshua 14:1-15

ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outlines of Joshua, Judges, Ruth*), **Pack Item 3** (*Poster: Key Characters in Joshua, Judges, Ruth*), and **Pack Item 4** (*Poster: Key Verse: Joshua 14:8*) on a focal wall.

ASK: What have you learned about trusting God's timing? (p. 53)

READ: Enlist a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 53. Affirm that it's never easy to wait, even on God.

EXPLAIN: Summarize this content from **Understand the Context** on page 53 to highlight the importance of God dividing the land:

- “Most allocations of the tribal territories are described using combinations of the listings of towns and geographic features of the land, linking them in order to trace the boundaries. . . . Some scholars believe these similarities suggest these records of tribal allotments would have contained the legal force of a treaty. When new towns sprung up in the various territories, they were added to the document throughout Israel's history. This procedure would update and recognize the existence of new settlements in those tribal areas

for as long as Israel possessed them. Consequently, the tribal allotments served as a record of God's faithfulness to keep the promises He made in His covenant with Israel.”

TRANSITION: Point out that today's session focuses on one person who trusted God for more than forty years. Direct attention to **Pack Item 3** (*Poster: Key Characters in Joshua, Judges, Ruth*) and highlight the description of Caleb. Affirm that Caleb serves as an example of God's faithfulness to those who trust Him.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

CONTEXT: Direct attention to “Allotment of the Land” on **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outlines of Joshua, Judges, Ruth*). Share that after detailing the battles Israel fought in the promised land, the writer described the allocation of land to the tribes.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud Joshua 14:1-5 as the group listens for how many tribes received land in Canaan. Remind adults that the tribes of Gad and Reuben, along with half of Manasseh, had received their inheritance on the eastern side of the Jordan River.

RECAP: Note that these verses reveal that the tribe of Levi received cities rather than a land allotment. Describe the process of distributing land to the remaining nine and a half tribes:

- **(14:2)** *Lots were used to determine God's will in a matter. No one is sure what lots looked like or how people knew how to interpret them. What is most important is that Scripture indicates the outcome of the lot was not random. God was in control of the procedure and outcomes.*

ASK: How was the dividing of the land a demonstration of trust in God and His wisdom? (p. 55)

DISCUSS: Encourage adults to suggest why the tribe of Levi (the Levites) did not receive an inheritance of land. Note that God said He was their inheritance. Point out that being spread across the land ensured they could teach the entire nation about God and His ways.



The Tribal Allotments of Israel

Learn more about where the Israelite tribes settled in the promised land

READ: Call for a volunteer to read aloud Joshua 14:6-9, directing the group to consider how old Caleb was at the time of Joshua 14.

RECAP: Direct attention again to Caleb's name on **Pack Item 3** (Poster: Key

Characters in Joshua, Judges, Ruth). Review his experiences as a spy when the Israelites had approached the promised land more than four decades earlier:

- **(14:6-7)** *Caleb reminded Joshua of the Lord's promises given when they were spies at Kadesh-barnea. The Israelites had camped at this site when Moses sent the spies into Canaan. That's also where the Lord condemned the Israelites to forty years of wilderness wandering because of their lack of faith. Only Joshua and Caleb were exempt (Num. 13-14). While they still had to wander for four decades, God promised to give them a place in the promised land. Caleb was forty years old when he scouted the land. Now, he was receiving his inheritance forty-five years later.*

ASK: What does it look like to follow the Lord wholeheartedly? (p. 55) Encourage volunteers to share the names of people they believe demonstrate wholehearted devotion to God. Discuss what qualities stand out with those people. Compare those qualities to the life of Caleb.

DISCUSS: Lead the group to discuss the obstacles Caleb may have faced in his decision to obey God wholeheartedly. Point out **Pack Item 4** (Poster: Key Verse: Joshua 14:8). Note that this is the memory verse for this session. Encourage the group to read the verse a couple of times and to continue reviewing it and asking God to help them apply it during the week ahead.

TRANSITION: *Though it had been 45 years since Caleb had scouted out the land, he was*

still not afraid to tackle any problems that might come up. If anything, his longstanding relationship with God gave him even more confidence of what the Lord could do.

READ: Call for a volunteer to read Joshua 14:10-15 as the group listens for what Caleb requested from Joshua.

ASK: What was significant about what Caleb asked of Joshua? (p. 55)

DISCUSS: Allow volunteers to share their responses to the question. Highlight Caleb's faith despite his advanced age. Also, note that his request involved the territory with the most difficult terrain and the most intimidating enemies.

RECAP: Summarize the following to point out Caleb's attitude as he embraced the challenge:

- "Not only did the Lord keep Caleb alive at eighty-five years old, but He also kept Caleb as strong as he was forty-five years prior. . . . Caleb was not too old or too weak to do what God had promised him he could do. . . . Caleb was eager to take on the same giants that had terrified the other ten spies who caused Israel to be too frightened to trust God and conquer the land. Joshua 11:21-22 indicates Israel had already defeated the Anakim, but some had gotten away only to return later. Caleb was ready and eager to go in and finish them off." (**Day Five**, p. 59)

ASK: Which of God's promises do you rely upon when facing unknown challenges? (p. 55)

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from this week's Bible passage:

- We will face daily opportunities to obey or disobey God's instructions.
- We can be assured that God knows and rewards those who follow Him wholeheartedly.
- We can be assured of God's presence and aid when we follow Him wholeheartedly.

REVIEW: Point out **Pack Item 4** (*Poster: Key Verse: Joshua 14:8*) again and lead the group to read the verse together at least twice.

ASK: What did Caleb mean in the second part of this verse? What does that mean for us as believers today?

DISCUSS: Guide the group to discuss the **Apply the Text** questions on page 55.

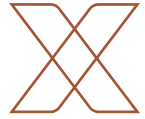
PRAY: Encourage adults to identify silently one area where they are currently wrestling with a choice to obey or disobey God. Provide time for them to talk with God about those struggles. Close in prayer, thanking God for keeping His promises and asking Him for the strength to live in complete obedience.

AFTER THE SESSION

During the week, send a text or email to the group. Share a promise from God in Scripture and explain why this promise is meaningful to you. Share the verse and reference. Encourage them to "reply all" and to share their favorite promise.

Vital Decision

Session 7 • Joshua 24:14-24



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 1** (*Map: The Conquest of Canaan*) and **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outlines of Joshua, Judges, Ruth*). Make copies of **Pack Item 10** (*Handout: The Life of Joshua*).

READ: Call for a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 61. Encourage adults to use a scale of 1-5, with one being “completely tuned out” and five being “completely tuned in” to describe how they respond to the safety information before a flight. Affirm that it is easy to get distracted.

ASK: Why are people tempted to ignore warnings of potential danger? (p. 61)

BACKGROUND: Refer to **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outlines of Joshua, Judges, Ruth*). Note that this week’s session wraps up the study of Joshua. Summarize this from **Understand the Context** (p. 61) to provide more background:

- “Chapters 23–24 contain Joshua’s last words to Israel. He challenged the people to remain faithful to the Lord and stay away from the false gods of the peoples still remaining in the land. Joshua warned them that if they worshiped these idols, then the Lord would destroy them. The people insisted they would remain faithful.

Consequently, Joshua made a covenant for the people and set up a memorial stone as a witness to the oath they made to the Lord. Israel worshiped God as long as Joshua and their elders who served beside Joshua lived.”

TRANSITION: *Joshua had led the people to do some incredible things as they moved into the promised land. His final words represent one last challenge for the people of God.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud Joshua 24:14-18 as the group listens for the response of the people to Joshua’s challenge.

RECAP: Point out the location of Shechem on **Pack Item 1** (*Map: The Conquest of Canaan*). Distribute copies of **Pack Item 10** (*Handout: The Life of Joshua*) and recount the significant moments from Joshua’s life. Highlight “Challenged Israel with a final covenant renewal.”

SHARE: Explain the nature of Joshua’s final message to the people:

- **(24:14-15)** *Joshua challenged the Israelites both to fear and to serve the Lord. The Hebrew verb translated fear conveys a reverence for God that moves*

people toward holy living. Such reverence came from learning the law and obeying it (Deut. 31:11-12). The Hebrew verb rendered worship can also mean “to serve.” The verb is closely related to a noun meaning “servant” or “slave.” Offering service or worship to God, however, is not bondage. To the contrary, it frees people. The Lord desires that we serve Him “in sincerity and in truth.” The wording suggests service that is “firm” or “complete.” Joshua commanded his listeners to demonstrate total devotion to God. God expects our commitment to Him to be absolute, holding nothing back.

ASK: Why is it important to consciously choose whom you will serve? (p. 63)

DISCUSS: How does your decision to serve the Lord influence people around you? (p. 63)

HIGHLIGHT: Affirm Joshua’s positive example and the people’s commitment to follow that example by serving God wholeheartedly.

- **(24:15)** Joshua made his personal stance clear. He and his family would “worship the LORD.” The Israelite leader did not attempt to manipulate the people or force them to choose God. He simply set a positive example they could follow.
- **(24:16-18)** The people rose to Joshua’s challenge. “We will certainly not abandon” conveys both will and emotions. “Abandon” also means “to leave” or “to forsake” and is used of the backsliding Israelites (Deut. 29:24-25). As a consequence of abandoning the

Lord, God’s people would experience the covenant curses (Deut. 28:20). They affirmed Joshua’s recital of God’s mighty acts. They knew who had rescued them out of Egypt, and they acknowledged the Lord’s “great signs.” This term likely designates the plagues on the Egyptians (Ex. 4:28-31), along with miracles like the parting of the Red Sea, providing manna, and bringing water from a rock. Joshua’s audience recognized that God had “protected” them during their journey to the promised land and in the conquest of it. Thus they declared their loyalty to the Lord. They would follow Joshua’s example of faithfulness and worship the Lord exclusively.

READ: Call for a volunteer to read Joshua 24:19-24, directing the group to listen for how many times the people affirmed their desire for the Lord.

DISCUSS: Lead the group to discuss why Joshua said the people would not be able to keep this commitment. Highlight that following God can be challenging at times.

EXPLAIN: Summarize what Joshua meant regarding Israel’s inability to worship the Lord and God’s refusal to forgive the Israelites’ sins:

- **(24:19-20)** Joshua had just passionately urged the Israelites to serve God alone. Yet when the people responded positively, he said that they would “not be able to worship the LORD.” Joshua seemed to be warning the Israelites against making a hasty promise that they had not considered thoroughly. He was urging

Israel to take God’s holiness seriously. It is similar to Jesus challenging followers to “calculate the cost” of discipleship (Luke 14:28-30). Further, Joshua noted that the Lord “will not forgive your transgressions and sins.” This was not an absolute, eternal statement for the Lord’s covenant people. The remainder of the Scriptures demonstrates this (see Rom. 11:11-24; Eph. 2:11-22). Nevertheless, it did mean that God would not overlook their unfaithfulness and there would be consequences for their sin.

ASK: What kinds of idols or false ideas compete for your time and attention? (p. 63)

EXAMINE: On the board, write *WORSHIP* vertically as an acrostic. Lead the group to suggest words or phrases that are related to worshiping the Lord. Encourage them to use these words to evaluate their own lives and to determine if idols are hindering their absolute commitment to God.

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from this week’s Bible passage:

- Each person must consider how he or she will respond to the Lord.
- We’re to put away any idols that might demand our devotion that rightfully belongs to the Lord.

REVIEW: Call for the group to discuss some practical ideas that help believers live out their devotion to the Lord. Encourage them to

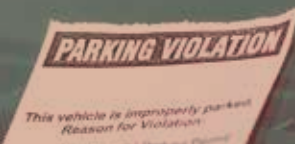
find specific ways they can express worship to the Lord each day.

DISCUSS: Lead the group to discuss the **Apply the Text** activity on page 63. Challenge adults to reflect throughout the week on what it looks like to be wholeheartedly devoted to the Lord in their context.

PRAY: Lead the group in a time of silent prayer, encouraging the adults to ask God to reveal any idols in their lives that are keeping them from a true commitment to the Lord.

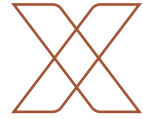
AFTER THE SESSION

Reinforce the session by texting or emailing the group this message: *Just as Joshua challenged the people to choose the Lord over the gods of the Canaanites, I challenge you to choose the Lord over the idols of this world this week.* Encourage adults to reflect on the **Apply the Text** questions on page 67. Let them know that the next session begins a study of the book of Judges.



Consequences

Session 8 • Judges 2:11-23



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 2** (Poster: *Outlines of Joshua, Judges, Ruth*). Write *Joshua → Judges* on the board or on a large sheet of paper. Make copies of **Pack Item 8** (Handout: *Joshua, Judges, Ruth Time Line*) and **Pack Item 13** (Handout: *The Cycle of Judges*).

ASK: What factors might cause people to break their commitments, and how can we guard against this in our own lives? (p. 69)
Discuss responses.

READ: Enlist a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 69.

BACKGROUND: Direct attention to what is written on the board (or a large sheet of paper). Point out that this session represents a shift from the book of Joshua to the book of Judges. Share that while the theme of Joshua's story was a wholehearted devotion to God, the theme for Judges is a cycle of sin, judgment, confession, and restoration.

EXPLAIN: Summarize this information from **Understand the Context** (p. 69) to provide more information:

- “The Israelites were not supposed to make agreements with the Canaanites and

coexist with them, but they did. Because of their sins, the angel of the Lord confronted Israel with a declaration of judgment. . . . As soon as Joshua and the elders who served with him died, a new “generation rose up who did not know the LORD or the works he had done for Israel” (2:10). This generation abandoned the Lord and began worshiping the gods of the surrounding peoples in Canaan. Instead of ridding the land of the Canaanites, Israel became like the Canaanites. As a result, whenever the Israelites went out to war, the Lord was against them and caused them to be defeated (2:15).”

TRANSITION: *The book of Judges focuses on the cycle of sin of the Israelites—and the rescue God provided through His judges.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

CONTEXT: Highlight the “Prologue” for Judges on **Pack Item 2** (Poster: *Outlines of Joshua, Judges, Ruth*). Explain that this prologue sets the context for Israel's sin in the rest of the book.

SHARE: Provide copies of **Pack Item 8** (Handout: *Joshua, Judges, Ruth Time Line*). Point out that Joshua had divided the land around 1385 BC. A few years later, Joshua died and the nation's spiritual spiral began.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read

Judges 2:11-15 as the group listens for the spiritual shift in Israel.

RECAP: Identify the gods pursued by the Israelites after Joshua's death:

- **(2:11-13)** The Israelites “followed other gods from the surrounding peoples.” Specifically, they pledged their allegiance to “Baal and the Ashtoreths.” Baal, the Canaanite god of weather and nature, lured the people for obvious reasons. As an agricultural society, the residents of Canaan depended on favorable weather conditions for their crops and livestock. The Ashtoreths (a female counterpart to Baal) represented the goddess of sex, love, and fertility. In this worship, prostitution was permitted, even encouraged.

ASK: What factors contribute to a person or a group abandoning God? (p. 71)

TRANSITION: *God had warned His people that idolatry would come with consequences. He poured out His anger on them in an effort to bring them back to Him.*

READ: Call for a volunteer to read aloud **Judges 2:16-19**, directing the group to listen for the cycle described.

EXAMINE: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 13** (*Handout: The Cycle of Judges*). Encourage adults to work in pairs to review the article and to highlight the key points. After a few minutes, allow the pairs to share their thoughts. Use the following information to explain the connection between spiritual prostitution and idolatry.

- **(2:17)** Rather than obeying God, the Israelites “prostituted themselves” by following false gods. The Hebrew wording can refer to literal adultery within the marriage context or, as here, to spiritual adultery against God through idolatry. Through His covenant with His people, God saw the Israelites as His spouse. Rejecting Him and turning to other gods was tantamount to adultery.

RECAP: Share more about the judges God raised up for Israel:

- **(2:16)** The judges functioned as military deliverers who saved their people from their enemies. With that said, the true Savior of Israel was the Lord Himself who raised up and empowered these leaders to deliver their people. God repeatedly raised up judges to deliver His people from their adversaries. The Lord was with the judge, and He enabled the judge to deliver and protect the people from their enemies.

ASK: What does God's providing a deliverer tell us about God's character? (p. 71)

READ: Call for the group to read silently **Judges 2:20-23**, looking for the primary reason God brought continued punishment against the Israelites.

ASK: Why is disobedience—sin—such a big deal to God? How can sin spiral us away from God today? (p. 71)

RECAP: Encourage adults to express in their own words how God revealed His attitude toward sin in these verses. Highlight that He withdrew His hand of protection from the people and allowed their enemies to

overwhelm them. Summarize the following to highlight God’s motivation for allowing His people to suffer at the hands of their enemies:

- **(2:22)** Punishment was not God’s only purpose in allowing Israel’s enemies in the promised land. He noted that He wanted “to test Israel.” The Hebrew rendered *test* can mean to evaluate the quality of an item or, metaphorically, an individual’s character. The idea relates to making sure something is real or has substance. Although God never tempts anyone to sin (see Jas. 1:13), He will put His people through times of testing and trials. Ultimately, God’s plan for Israel was to bring them back to Him. That is always the goal of chastisement from the Lord. He never allows His people to suffer for no reason or simply to be cruel.

STATE: *This was not the generation that had conquered the land. That generation, along with Joshua, had passed from the scene. This was a new generation of Israelites who had to learn how to trust God for themselves. When they failed, God placed them in situations that would challenge them to come back to Him. Repentance and restoration are always God’s purpose in discipline and testing.*

ASK: **When and how has God tested you? How is your faith stronger as a result?** (p. 71)

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from this week’s Bible passage:

- God’s people must guard against the danger of forgetting what the Lord has done for them.
- Believers can be assured that God’s faithfulness to act on behalf of His people is rooted in His character, not in ours.
- Believers can expect their obedience to God to be tested.

DISCUSS: Guide the group to read and respond to the **Apply the Text** questions on page 71. Challenge adults to remember that God’s character is the key to His discipline.

PRAY: Provide a few moments of silent prayer, encouraging adults to reflect on their lives and to identify how they might be caught in a cycle of sin. Urge them to confess this to God and ask for His help moving forward. Close the session in prayer, asking God to protect each adult from the same cycle of sin, judgment, confession, and restoration that the Israelites experienced.

AFTER THE SESSION

Send an email or text to challenge the group to reflect on the **Apply the Text** questions from page 75. Encourage them to develop spiritual disciplines to prevent spiritual drift.

Called

Session 9 • Judges 6:1-4,7-16



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Prior to the group time, display **Pack Item 3** (*Poster: Key Characters in Joshua, Judges, Ruth*), **Pack Item 5** (*Map: The Judges of Israel*), and **Pack Item 6** (*Poster: The Oppressors in Judges*).

ASK: When have you felt inadequate for a task? Where did you turn for help? (p. 77)

READ: Direct a volunteer to read the opening paragraph from page 77. Highlight the two dangers of comparing ourselves to others. Encourage adults to share whether they are more likely to see themselves as superior to others or inferior to others. Be prepared to share your own thoughts.

CONTEXT: Point out **Pack Item 5** (*Map: The Judges of Israel*) and **Pack Item 6** (*Poster: The Oppressors in Judges*). Use this information to explain the first several judges in Israel and the enemies they defeated with God's help. Note that today's session focuses on God's call of Gideon.

- "Judges 6 indicates the Israelites abandoned the Lord again, so the Lord raised up the Midianites, accompanied by the Amalekites and the Qedemites, who oppressed Israel for seven years. As a result, the Israelites were impoverished

and cried out to the Lord. . . . After that, the Lord called Gideon to be the next judge to deliver Israel from their oppressors. Gideon's account is the largest section in the book of Judges." (p. 77)

TRANSITION: *If we asked Gideon how he compared himself to others, he would have fallen on the "inferior" end of the spectrum. But God still called him, and God still used Him.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud Judges 6:1-4,7-10 as the group listens for why God let Midian oppress Israel.

DISPLAY: Direct attention to **Pack Item 5** (*Map: The Judges of Israel*) and show the location of events taking place in Judges 6.

RECAP: Explain the identity of the Midianites and what they did to the Israelites in these verses:

- The Midianites had been enemies of Israel since the time they opposed Israel when Moses led the nation into the region east of the Jordan in preparation to enter Canaan (Num. 25:1-18). "Like swarming locusts, the Midianites often made decimating, swift strikes on their enemies

using camels over long distances. They would leave little of value behind them and get away before any counterstrike could be made. The effects of the Midianite raids on Israel were devastating. For seven years, the Israelites existed in constant fear as they resorted to living in the mountains, caves, and strongholds because of the terrifying lightning strikes of the Midianites that could happen at any moment.” (p. 81)

ASK: Do you think God’s judgment through the Midianites was too harsh? Why or why not? (p. 79)

DISCUSS: Allow adults to share responses. Remind them of the cycle of sin in Judges and that God’s discipline always focuses on bringing people back to Him. Note that God heard the people’s cries and sent a prophet (v. 8) to remind Israel of who they should be following and to rebuke them for not serving Him.

ASK: What outcomes should we anticipate if we live in disobedience to God? (p. 79)

TRANSITION: *Even as His prophet was delivering a message of rebuke, God was at work. After the Israelites cried out to Him, He prepared an unlikely judge to deliver them from their powerful enemies.*

READ: Call for a volunteer to read aloud Judges 6:11-14, directing the group to listen for how Gideon responded to the angel.

DISCUSS: Ask volunteers to share what they know about Gideon. Refer to **Pack Item 3** (Poster: *Key Characters in Joshua, Judges, Ruth*) to provide more information.

ASK: How have you typically responded to God’s call in your life? (p. 79)

RECAP: Summarize the following content to explain why Gideon was in a winepress, and Gideon’s reaction to the angel’s message.

- **(6:11)** Gideon’s threshing wheat in the winepress shows just how desperate the situation had become in Israel. Normally, threshing grain was done outdoors on a high spot so the wind could blow away the chaff. But to hide this wheat from the Midianites, Gideon was working below ground in a sunken winepress—a less than ideal spot. It’s worth noting that Gideon may have been making the best of a bad situation rather than being curled up in despair.
- **(6:12)** As if a visit from a heavenly being was not shocking enough, the angel’s message surprised Gideon. The message had two parts. First, the angel said that “the LORD is with you.” In his current state of desperation, it was hard for Gideon to believe God was with him. Likewise, seeing what Midian was doing to Israel, it would have been easier to think that God had forsaken His people. Second, the angel called Gideon a “valiant warrior.” Again, Gideon was hiding from the enemy in a winepress. As his response will indicate, Gideon had trouble embracing any part of the angel’s greeting. Yet, God saw something in Gideon that Gideon had not yet seen in himself.

ASK: How might our circumstances impact our response to God’s calling? (p. 79)

TRANSITION: *God promised Gideon His strength in fulfilling this assignment, but he was still skeptical. As Gideon interacted with the angel, the full awareness of what was being asked of him set in.*

READ: Call for the group to read silently **Judges 6:15-16** and to mark phrases that explain why Gideon could fulfill God's plan.

HIGHLIGHT: Write on the board *I will be with you*. Discuss what that meant for Gideon. Discuss what that means for believers today.

RECAP: Discuss the differences between Gideon's feelings of inadequacy and the presence of the Lord. Share this truth:

- **(6:16)** From Gideon's point of view, he did not have the credentials or the ability to deliver Israel. However, God supplied Gideon everything he needed to accomplish the Lord's will—His presence. God's presence was everything Gideon would need to strike down the entire host of Midianites as if they were but "one man."

ASK: How does the assurance of God's presence negate our excuse of inadequacy? (p. 79)

MEMORIZE: Distribute index cards and pens and lead the group to write Judges 6:16 on the card. Encourage them to put it on their bathroom mirror and review it each day.

PRAYER: Lead the group to pray, thanking God that He is always with them and that He empowers them to accomplish the things He calls them to do.

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from this week's Bible passage:

- We can anticipate that when people turn their backs on God, they will experience undesirable consequences.
- We can be encouraged to know that God calls unlikely people to do great things for Him.
- Believers should trust God when being called upon to take a specific action for Him.

DISCUSS: Guide the group to discuss the **Apply the Text** question on page 79. Lead a brief discussion on how believers can point one another toward the truth that God will use them and empower them for His glory.

PRAY: Close in prayer, asking God to empower the group to trust Him when He calls them to do something.

AFTER THE SESSION

Send a text or email to the group with the message: "I am with you," says the Lord." Remind them that this is part of the memory verse for this session. Encourage them to continue reflecting on this verse and memorizing it during the week. Challenge the group to be on the lookout for situations where God is working around them and through them this week.

Trust

Session 10 • Judges 7:1-8,19-23



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outlines of Joshua, Judges, Ruth*) and **Pack Item 5** (*Map: The Judges of Israel*). Make copies of **Pack Item 9** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in Joshua, Judges, Ruth*).

INTRODUCE: Enlist a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 85. Lead a brief discussion of “Cinderella stories.” Allow adults to share times they have seen a “Cinderella story” take place.

DISCUSS: Why do stories of people rising from humble circumstances to achieve success resonate so strongly with us? (p. 85)

REVIEW: Direct attention to **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outlines of Joshua, Judges, Ruth*). Highlight Gideon on the list of judges. Remind adults about God’s call of Gideon from the previous session.

- “Judges 7:1–8:21 recounts Gideon’s victory over Midian. He began with thirty-two thousand men, but God reduced the number to three hundred. This was to ensure that Israel knew the victory was by God’s power, not their own strength. In the aftermath of victory over Midian, the Israelites wanted to make Gideon king.

- But he refused, saying God would be their king (Judg. 8:22-23). Though there was peace in Israel for forty years until Gideon died, Gideon himself led all of Israel to worship an idol in his hometown. When Gideon died the Israelites began worshiping the Baals again (8:24-32).” (p. 85)

TRANSITION: *Gideon’s call was unlikely; but, as we’ll see today, the way God provided deliverance for the Israelites was even more unlikely.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

ASK: When has anyone ever asked you to do something that seemed outrageous and not doable?

READ: Invite a volunteer to read aloud **Judges 7:1-3** as the group listens for the unexpected directions from God.

DISCUSS: On the board or a large sheet of paper, write 32,000. Explain that this was the original number of fighting men Gideon had recruited from the tribes of Israel. Lead a brief discussion about why God said that number was too big. Summarize this content:

- **(7:2-3)** Though massively outnumbered already, God said that Gideon had “too

many troops” for the battle. The phrase “for me to hand the Midianites over to them” again highlighted God’s role in bringing the victory to His people. The Lord wanted to make sure His people wouldn’t mistakenly think they defeated the Midianites in their own strength. He stated clearly that the Israelites would have no reason to “elevate themselves.” To downsize the army, the Lord instituted a two-pronged reduction plan. The first stage was straightforward. God told Gideon to announce to his troops that whoever was fearful at the prospect of fighting the Midianites could leave.

ASK: In what ways might we try to do God’s work by our own might and for our glory? (p. 87)

PRAY: Distribute copies of **Pack Item 9** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in Joshua, Judges, Ruth*) and encourage adults to use Judges 7:2 as a prayer prompt. Urge them to consult the **Explore the Bible Prayer Guide** (QR code on p. 63).

TRANSITION: *Gideon lost two thirds of his soldiers in a matter of minutes. The worrisome discrepancy between the armies had grown larger—but God wasn’t done yet.*

READ: Call for a volunteer to read aloud Judges 7:4-8, directing the group to listen to how God downsized Gideon’s army again.

ASK: When have you been part of a “trust fall” exercise? What is the purpose of this kind of activity?

DISCUSS: Allow adults who have been part of a trust fall to share their experiences.

Compare the feelings of a trust fall to what Gideon may have been feeling as his men drank the water.

RECAP: Review what happened after God told Gideon that he still had too many troops:

- **(7:4-8)** Even after two thirds of the soldiers went home because they were afraid, God still told Gideon that he had “too many troops.” So, the Lord devised an unusual plan to reduce the number even more. God told Gideon to lead his soldiers “down to the water” so He could “test them.” The test involved how a soldier drank from the pool. God said a man who “laps water . . . like a dog” should be separated from one who “kneels to drink.” Of the ten thousand men who drank at the spring, only three hundred scooped up the water and drank it from cupped hands. The Lord told Gideon He would save Israel using these three hundred men.

SHARE: Note that in a short amount of time, God had reduced Gideon’s army by more than ninety-nine percent. Emphasize that He had put them in a position where they had no choice but to trust Him and to give Him the glory for the victory He provided.

ASK: When have you had to trust God despite not understanding what He was doing or asking? (p. 87)

READ: Call for a volunteer to read Judges 7:19-23, leading the group to listen for how God miraculously delivered the Israelites from the Midianites.

RECAP: Review God’s “battle plan” for Israel and its results:

- **(7:19-23)** “Gideon divided his men into three groups of one hundred in each company. He equipped each man with a ram’s horn in one hand and an empty pitcher with a torch inside of it in the other hand. They had dispersed themselves all around the camp. . . . First, they blew their horns. Second, they smashed their jars. Third, they held up their lit torches that had been concealed in the jars. In a normal nighttime military maneuver, only someone at the front of a company would have been carrying a lit torch. Gideon’s three hundred men appeared to be three hundred companies surrounding the Midianites. Finally, they shouted, ‘A sword for the LORD and for Gideon!’ . . . There was so much chaos that the Lord caused all of the Midianites to begin attacking each other.” (p. 90)

ASK: How should knowing that God acts in unpredictable ways impact how we live? (p. 87)

DISCUSS: Lead the group to discuss how these events and actions would bring God glory. Encourage them to consider how they can allow God to move and do things His way in their lives.

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from this week’s Bible passage:

- Believers dishonor God when they seek the glory that belongs to Him alone.

- Believers need to trust that God’s way of doing things is always best.

- Believers should pray for God to do what only He can do.

REFLECT: Encourage the group to read and reflect on the **Apply the Text** activity on page 87. Urge them to list two or three ways they can glorify God in the margin of their book.

PRAY: Enlist a volunteer to read Joshua 7:2 aloud. Point out that this is the memory verse for this session. Challenge them to continue using **Pack Item 9** (*Handout: Praying Scripture in Joshua, Judges, Ruth*) to pray through this verse during the week. Close the session in prayer, thanking God that His ways of working are always the best ways. Pray that the group would be aware of God’s work for His glory around them.

AFTER THE SESSION

Reinforce the session by sending a text or email to the group. Include the text for Judges 7:2 and ask: **Where have you seen God at work this week?** Encourage the group to “reply all” with their responses as a way to encourage one another. Explain that the next session will focus on the final leader mentioned in the book of Judges: Samson. Suggest they read Judges 13–16 to prepare for the session.

Compromise

Session 11 • Judges 16:16-31



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 3** (Poster: *Key Characters in Joshua, Judges, Ruth*) and **Pack Item 6** (Poster: *The Oppressors in Judges*) on a focal wall. Make copies of **Pack Item 13** (Handout: *The Cycle of Judges*).

READ: Direct a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 93.

DISCUSS: How has understanding the principle of cause and effect influenced the choices you make in life? (p. 93)

CONTEXT: Briefly recount the previous sessions from Judges. Distribute copies of **Pack Item 13** (Handout: *The Cycle of Judges*) and review how Israel kept experiencing God’s punishment for sin.

SHARE: Highlight “Samson” on **Pack Item 3** (Poster: *Key Characters in Joshua, Judges, Ruth*). Summarize this information from **Understand the Context** to provide more background:

- “The angel of the Lord appeared to [Samson’s] barren mother and informed her that she and her husband would have a son and that they must raise him as a Nazirite (13:2-7). This meant that he was not to consume anything derived from

the grapevine, he was to abstain from alcohol, his hair was never to be cut, and he was to avoid contact with any corpse (Num. 6:1-21). The Spirit of the Lord stirred Samson, and he was a judge in Israel for twenty years (Judg. 13:25; 15:20). Samson, however, had a flawed character and kept the wrong company.” (p. 93)

TRANSITION: *Samson demonstrated a weak moral character on many occasions. But in his encounter with a woman named Delilah, he allowed his lack of self-control to go too far—and he suffered for it.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Instruct each adult to read **Judges 16:16-20** with a partner and to discuss what sticks out to them. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share their thoughts. Highlight today’s summary statement: *Samson’s physical strength could not save him from the consequences of his weak moral character.*

PREPARE: Direct attention to **Pack Item 6** (Poster: *The Oppressors in Judges*) and highlight the Philistines. Point out that Israel’s cycle of sin had placed them under the control of their enemies again.

CONTEXT: Summarize this information to provide more context:

- “Judges 16:4 introduces Delilah, whose name means ‘flirt,’ stating that Samson ‘fell in love’ with her. When the five Philistine governors learned of this, they saw it as a possible opportunity to capitalize on Samson’s vulnerability. They went to Delilah to convince her to persuade Samson to reveal the source of his strength so that they could take him captive. If she did this, each leader promised to give Delilah 1,100 pieces of silver.” (p. 97)

EXPLAIN: Share that Samson’s strength did not come from his hair but from his obedience to God. Note that Samson’s character had led him to compromise his vow on multiple occasions, and his association with Delilah left him open to a final collapse.

ASK: How can the people with whom we choose to associate impact our ability to remain faithful to God? (p. 95)

TRANSITION: *Samson’s physical strength could not save him from the consequences of his moral weakness.*

READ: Call for a volunteer to read Judges 16:21-25, directing the group to listen to how the Philistines mistreated Samson.

RECAP: Lead a brief discussion about Samson’s devastating fall:

- **(16:21)** Through his lack of conviction and discernment, Samson became easy prey for his adversaries. The ruthless Philistines “seized him and gouged out his eyes.” The man who lived his life by the lust of his

eyes had his eyes gouged out. The man who proudly went wherever he pleased was now forced to grind grain in prison like an animal.

EXAMINE: Summarize the following information about the Philistine god, Dagon.

- **(16:23)** The primary Philistine god was called “Dagon.” He was most likely a storm god, which would have made him roughly equivalent to the Canaanite god Baal or a fertility god in charge of the harvest. Whatever his exact role in their pantheon, we see the Philistines credited him with the victory. In the ancient world, when one people group defeated another in battle, it was assumed that their god had defeated the god of the enemy. The name of Dagon is mentioned in only two other places in the Bible (1 Chron. 10:10; 1 Sam. 5).

REFLECT: Encourage adults to suggest things that Samson lost as a result of his weak character. (*Examples: his eyes, his dignity, his strength, his intimacy with God, and so forth*) Record their responses on the board or on a large sheet of paper.

ASK: What do you think was Samson’s greatest loss, and why? (p. 95)

SHARE: *Samson certainly lost a great deal through his compromise and his lack of self-control. But the writer of Judges also provides a glimmer of hope: Samson’s hair began to grow back. This was a sign of God’s grace and a reminder that He wasn’t done using Samson just yet. As believers, we can take comfort in the “second chances” God provides.*

READ: Read Judges 16:26-31, instructing the group to consider how God did not abandon Samson. Allow adults to share their insights.

EXPLAIN: Point out that despite Samson's destructive choices in the past, he knew he could call out to God in this moment. The Lord heard and answered Samson's prayer.

RECAP: Share that even in this moment, Samson's motives likely were not entirely noble:

- **(16:28)** First, Samson asked God to “remember” him. He was asking God to act on his behalf. Second, he asked God to “strengthen” him. He acknowledged that any strength he had came from God. Third, he asked God to let him “pay back the Philistines” for blinding him. In this last request, we see that Samson still didn't understand his role before God. He sought “vengeance” more than justice and payback more than serving God. His focus was on the wrong done to him rather than on delivering the Israelites from the Philistines' oppression. While we see some growth, then, Samson's flawed character remained.

ASK: In light of Samson's story, how would you counsel someone who is experiencing the consequences of sinful choices? (p. 95)

SAY: *Samson's relatives retrieved his body and buried him in a family tomb. He suffered the consequences of his sinful choices. Believers still suffer for immoral decisions, but God is only a prayer for forgiveness away.*

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from this week's Bible passage:

- Believers should avoid putting themselves in situations that will tempt them to sin.
- Believers who compromise their faithfulness to God will eventually be put to shame.
- Believers can be confident that God does not abandon them, in spite of their sin.

REVIEW: Lead the group to summarize this session. Allow one adult to start the story with a single sentence. Go around the group, allowing each adult to add a sentence until the entire story is complete. Lead the group to answer “Why?” for each statement above.

REFLECT: Read the session's summary statement: *Samson's physical strength could not save him from the consequences of his weak moral character.* Lead the group to discuss the **Apply the Text** questions on page 95.

PRAY: Close in prayer, asking God to give each adult an awareness of the Holy Spirit that will keep them from sinful choices.

AFTER THE SESSION

Send a text or email to the group. State that the next session begins a study of the book of Ruth, a story of God's faithfulness in a dark time. Urge them to read through this short book before your next Bible study.

Faithfulness

Session 12 • Ruth 1:11-18; 2:5-12



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 2** (Poster: *Outlines of Joshua, Judges, Ruth*), **Pack Item 3** (Poster: *Key Characters in Joshua, Judges, Ruth*), and **Pack Item 7** (Poster: *Key Verse: Ruth 1:16*).

INTRODUCE: After the group has arrived, invite a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 101.

ASK: How might faith in God's care and control help a person navigate grief and fear? (p. 101)

DISCUSS: Lead a brief discussion with the group about their responses. Ask for two or three volunteers to share their experiences.

RECAP: Point out the outline for Ruth on **Pack Item 2** (Poster: *Outlines of Joshua, Judges, Ruth*). Explain that the next two sessions will come from the book of Ruth and will focus on learning to depend on God in uncertain times. For context, summarize this from page 101:

- “The book of Ruth comes toward the end of the judges’ rule over Israel just before the start of Israel’s reign of kings. . . . Ruth reminds the reader that God’s providence and faithfulness will not fail no matter how dark the times. . . . The story is one of tragic

loss, deep loyalty, and God’s faithfulness to Ruth, a foreigner who trusts Him. As the story unfolds, Ruth decided to remain with Naomi after the loss of her husband. She followed God into an unknown future and found God faithful through every trial and hardship.”

TRANSITION: *In today’s study, loyalty will be exemplified amid uncertainty. We will see that even in the midst of tragedy, God revealed His care and sovereignty.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Call for a volunteer to read Ruth 1:11-15 as the group listens to how Naomi, Orpah, and Ruth responded to their tragic loss.

DISCUSS: Draw attention to **Pack Item 3** (Poster: *Key Characters in Joshua, Judges, Ruth*) and highlight the information about Naomi and Ruth. Lead a brief discussion on Naomi’s questions. Reflect on why she likely believed Ruth and Orpah were better off in Moab.

SHARE: Note that Naomi felt bitter because she thought God had abandoned her (v. 13). Highlight the contrast between Ruth and Orpah. Use the following information to supplement discussion of this contrast.

- **(1:14)** While both women “wept loudly” at the prospect of being separated from Naomi, Orpah’s kiss was a gesture marking her decision to part ways. Her choice was understandable and rooted in practicality, reflecting no wrongdoing but rather a sensible choice given the circumstances. She was returning to her family and familiar surroundings, which promised security and a potential future. In stark contrast, Ruth “clung” to Naomi. The Hebrew wording suggests holding fast to something or following closely after someone. It also can refer to two things that are stuck together. Ruth was determined to stay by Naomi’s side. She was willing to embrace uncertainty for the sake of her bond with Naomi.

ASK: Why does loss draw some people closer to God, while others struggle with anger toward God? How can the church community be a source of compassion for both? (p. 103)

READ: Choose a volunteer to read Ruth 1:16-18 aloud, directing the group to listen for key points in Ruth’s response to Naomi.

ASK: What value does society place on loyalty? (p. 103)

EXPLAIN: Discuss responses. Remind adults about the contrast between Ruth and Orpah. Use the following information to explain the structure of Ruth’s pledge and its intensity.

- **(1:16-17)** Ruth offered a poetic, three-part statement of loyalty to her mother-in-law. Each phrase in the reply represents

a stronger, more personal commitment from Ruth to Naomi. Ruth fully committed herself to Naomi’s country, people, and God. Her pledge amounts to a personal covenant with Naomi that included genuine faith in God. By invoking God’s name, “Lord” (Yahweh), Ruth showed her commitment to the God of Israel and His will and accepted possible punishment if she broke her vow to Naomi.

REVIEW: Direct attention to **Pack Item 7** (*Poster: Key Verse: Ruth 1:16*). Encourage the group to read this session’s memory verse from the poster. Emphasize that in our age of self-promotion and individualism, Ruth’s loyal love stands out like a rare jewel.

SHARE: Point out that once she heard Ruth’s passionate plea, Naomi stopped trying to convince her to follow Orpah back to Moab. Suggest that Naomi realized that Ruth wanted to stay by her side, no matter what.

ASK: How can loyalty be a way to view God’s provision and protection? (p. 103)

TRANSITION: *By pledging her loyalty to Naomi, Ruth was also surrendering her future to God.*

READ: Invite a volunteer to read Ruth 2:5-12, focusing the group to identify God’s protection and provision for Ruth as she went out into the fields as a foreigner.

EXPLAIN: *In the ancient world, gleaning involved going behind workers and gathering the grain that fell to the ground during the harvest. By Jewish law, Ruth had the right to glean in any field with the landowner’s*

permission. In fact, the law encouraged landowners to leave the corners of the fields for the poor. This would allow them to put in an honest day's work and provide for their needs without shame.

HIGHLIGHT: Draw attention to **Pack Item 3** (Poster: *Key Characters in Joshua, Judges, Ruth*) and highlight the information about Boaz. Draw attention to how God began to connect the dots for Boaz and Ruth:

- Finding Boaz's field, a close relative to their family, was not by chance. Her steps were established by the Lord (Ps. 37:23). When Ruth gained permission to glean, she did not know the field belonged to Boaz, a relative of her deceased father-in-law, Elimelech. Boaz told Ruth not to glean in another field. He did not want her to go outside of his protection but to stay close to the other female servants.

ASK: How has God provided for you in a way that assured you of His care? (p. 103)

TRANSITION: *Even in our darkest moments, we can find hints of God's care and sovereignty in our lives. We might feel frightened or confused, but He is always at work and providing for our needs.*

CHALLENGE

REVIEW: Review these points from this week's Bible passage:

- Believers will suffer loss.
- We need to allow others to minister to us.

- Believers can be confident in God's sovereign ability to provide for our needs.

REFLECT: Guide the group to read and reflect on the **Apply the Text** questions on page 103. Challenge them to recall times God has strengthened their faith during times of loss and uncertainty. Encourage them to list ways the group can serve others who are going through difficult times.

MEMORIZE: Direct attention again to **Pack Item 7** (Poster: *Key Verse: Ruth 1:16*). Lead the group in reading the memory verse aloud two or three times. Challenge them to continue working to memorize the verse this week and to ask God how He wants them to apply it in their lives each day.

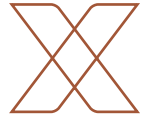
PRAY: Close in prayer, thanking God for His sovereignty in times of suffering. Lead the group to pray in response to today's points. Ask that God would help them know that their future is secure in Him.

AFTER THE SESSION

Send a text or email to the group, thanking adults for their attendance and participation. Invite them to reflect on God's provision in their lives. Suggest they read and respond personally to the **Apply the Text** questions on page 107. Encourage them to express gratitude to anyone who has walked with them through a painful circumstance.

Redemption

Session 13 • Ruth 3:8-13; 4:13-17



ENGAGE

PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 3** (*Poster: Key Characters in Joshua, Judges, Ruth*). Make copies of **Pack Item 14** (*Handout: The Kinsman-Redeemer*).

ASK: What has provided you a sense of hope when everything seemed out of control? (p. 109)

READ: Direct adults to read the opening paragraph on page 109 silently and to mark a phrase or sentence that sticks out to them. After a few minutes, allow volunteers to share what they noted.

CONTEXT: Point out **Pack Item 3** (*Poster: Key Characters in Joshua, Judges, Ruth*) and highlight the information for Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz. Allow adults to share what they recall about these individuals from the previous session. Summarize this content from **Understand the Context** (p. 109):

- “Simply trying to survive, Ruth went to the fields of one of their family’s close relatives. While there, she met Boaz, ‘a prominent man of noble character’ (2:1). Immediately, Boaz was attracted to Ruth’s integrity (2:11-12), and he invited her to glean from the best parts of his field under his protection. Naomi knew this

budding relationship could be a chance for their family redeemer to take notice of their plight.”

TRANSITION: *Share that today’s session considers how Boaz’s role as Ruth’s kinsman-redeemer applies to our need for a redeemer today.*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Read Ruth 3:8-10 aloud as the group listens to what happened in this pivotal moment.

EXPLAIN: Use the information below to explain Ruth’s comments to Boaz. Distribute copies of **Pack Item 14** (*Handout: The Kinsman-Redeemer*). Use the handout to explain the role of the kinsman-redeemer in ancient Israel.

- **(3:9)** Ruth urged Boaz to “take me under your wing” because he was a “family redeemer.” The term relates to the Jewish law of kinsman redemption. In addition to purchasing family land that had been forfeited (Lev. 25:25) and restoring a relative that had been enslaved (Lev. 25:48), redeemers were expected to marry a childless widow and carry on the family name (Deut. 25:5-10). “Take me under your wing” has a broad

interpretation in Hebrew, but it seems clear that Ruth meant it as a euphemism for marriage. The imagery suggests security and peace, especially within the context of marriage. Ruth was urging Boaz to accept his family responsibility, which he was eager to do.

RECAP: Highlight Boaz’s response to Ruth’s request:

- **(3:10)** Boaz understood the situation and expressed his delight in Ruth’s trusting him to be her husband. The term “daughter” may reflect a significant age difference, but Boaz affirmed Ruth’s “kindness” because she had not “pursued younger men.” Her decision to seek Boaz, her family redeemer, over pursuing younger men showcased her faithfulness to family obligations rather than personal preference. The circumstance is certainly untraditional and unconventional for modern readers, but the unfolding story of God’s redemption shows how God’s ways are not ours (Isa. 55:8). The way the Lord works might seem mysterious, but when God’s people walk in integrity, focused on bringing God glory, His plans unfold beautifully.

MEMORIZE: Enlist a volunteer to read Colossians 1:14. Share that this is the memory verse for this session. Lead the group in reading the verse aloud two or three times to help them start memorizing it. Briefly discuss how Boaz serving as Ruth’s kinsman-redeemer illustrates what Jesus has done for His people.

ASK: Ruth’s actions were risky and required trust. When have you had to take a step

of faith that felt uncertain? What was the outcome? (p. 111)

READ: Ask for a volunteer to read aloud **Ruth 3:11-13** as the group considers what might have unsettled Ruth and Boaz as they talked about their situation.

DISCUSS: Write the following question on the board: *What scares you?* Encourage a few volunteers to share their responses. Note that sometimes our fears can hold us back from experiencing all God has for us.

ASK: What might keep us from trusting God with our fears? (p. 111)

SHARE: Highlight that Naomi and Ruth were trying to make sure they survived. Share Boaz’s concern was that he was not the closest redeemer for Ruth. A closer family redeemer had the right to their land and Ruth.

SAY: *Ruth had proven her integrity long before she arrived in Bethlehem, and the entire city knew about it. Boaz also was a person of integrity, and he was going to make sure Naomi and Ruth were protected. If the other redeemer would give them security, he could live with that. If not, he would marry Ruth and meet the family’s needs moving forward. And he refused to drag his feet. When morning arrived, he went to work.*



Family Tree of Boaz and Ruth

Discover more about the remarkable lineage of Boaz and Ruth.

READ: Call on a volunteer to read aloud

Ruth 4:13-17 as the group listens to how God redeemed Ruth and Naomi's future.

ASK: In what ways does God's redemptive work change the way you live daily and give you confidence for the future? (p. 111)

SUMMARIZE: Briefly review Ruth 4:1-12. Highlight that Boaz had spoken with the primary redeemer as promised and that man passed the right of redemption to Boaz.

SHARE: Point out that God completely rewrote Ruth and Naomi's story by providing a family redeemer and a baby boy:

- **(4:14-17)** The people recognized God's favor over Naomi's family, who provided them with a "family redeemer." As Naomi entered Bethlehem months earlier, she arrived a bitter and broken woman (1:20-21). Now, she held a grandson. Resting in her arms was the providential love of God. Earlier, Naomi could only see the unfavorable circumstances of her life. But God's timing was perfect. Even when we cannot understand God's ways, we can rest in His love. God works "all things together for the good of those who love him, who are called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

ASK: How do you feel knowing that God is at work in every generation? (p. 111)

SAY: *Ruth's story is common to everyone who has ever lived. We all fall short of God's grace. We all need a Savior, a Kinsman-Redeemer. Jesus is the ultimate Kinsman-Redeemer.*

CHALLENGE

DISCUSS: Guide the group to discuss the **Apply the Text** questions on page 111. Encourage adults to find ways to encourage one another to remember God's love and grace during difficult times. Challenge them to read and reflect on the **Apply the Text** question on page 115 during the week ahead.

SHARE: Remind adults that Ruth's story is everyone's story because we all need a Kinsman-Redeemer to rescue us. Briefly review the Plan of Salvation on the inside front cover. Affirm again that you are available to talk to anyone who wants to know more about accepting the redemption Jesus offers as our Kinsman-Redeemer.

PRAY: Urge adults to use the **Explore the Bible Prayer Guide** (QR code on page 63) to guide their prayers during the week. Close the session in prayer, thanking God for providing a Kinsman-Redeemer and for the peace that only He provides. Ask Him to strengthen each person during situations of uncertainty.

AFTER THE SESSION

During the week, send the group a text or an email, encouraging them to reflect on what they learned from the book of Ruth. Suggest they write their thoughts in a journal and review what they have written often. Remind them that they can trust God with their future even when it looks uncertain. Let the group know that the next session begins a study on the book of Romans.

VISUAL IDEAS

These items are available in the *Explore the Bible: Leader Pack* (see goExploreTheBible.com) or you can use these descriptions to create your own.

Pack Item 1

Map: The Conquest of Canaan Sessions 1-7

Locate a map that highlights Israel's conquest of the promised land. Highlight cities and actions related to the Central, Southern, and Northern Campaigns.

Pack Item 2

Poster: Outlines of Joshua, Judges, Ruth Sessions 1-13

Refer to page 9 of the DDG to create a poster that outlines the books of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth.

Pack Item 3

Poster: Key Characters in Joshua, Judges, Ruth Sessions 1-13

Create a chart that highlights important figures in the books of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth. Include names and brief details about their roles in the books. Names could include Joshua, Rahab, Achan, Caleb, Gideon, Samson, Naomi, Ruth, and Boaz.

Pack Item 4

Poster: Key Verse: Joshua 14:8 Session 6

Create a poster with the text of Joshua 14:8.

Pack Item 5

Map: The Judges of Israel Session 5

Locate or create a map that highlights where each of the judges of Israel ministered.

Pack Item 6

Poster: The Oppressors in Judges Sessions 8-11

Create a chart listing the enemies that oppressed God's people in the book of Judges. Include the name of the oppressor, the reference in Judges, and the judge who defeated each enemy.

Pack Item 7

Poster: Key Verse: Ruth 1:16 Session 12

Create a poster with the text of Ruth 1:16.

Pack Item 8

Handout: Joshua, Judges, Ruth Time Line Sessions 1-13

Locate a study Bible with a time line of the major people and events related to the books of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth. Include both biblical and non-biblical historical references for context.

Pack Item 9

Handout: Praying Scripture in Joshua, Judges, Ruth Sessions 1-13

Create a handout to help adults pray through key Scriptures in Joshua, Judges, and Ruth. Focus on the following questions: *What does this passage teach me about God and His character? How should I respond to what He is showing me about Himself?*



Pack Item 10

Handout: The Life of Joshua Sessions 1-7

Using a study Bible, Bible dictionary, or other resource, create a chart that highlights key events in the life of Joshua. Include biblical references from the books of Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Joshua.

Pack Item 11

Handout: Memorial Stones Session 3

Using a study Bible, Bible dictionary, or other resource, create an article that describes the significance of the stones taken from the Jordan River after God miraculously led His people into the promised land.

Pack Item 12

Handout: Winning Strategy Session 4

Create an application handout that encourages adults to hear and obey God as Joshua and Israel did when conquering Canaan. Include columns for the following: *What situation are you praying about? What is God saying to you about that situation? What practical steps can you take to obey Him? How are you seeing God move in that situation?*

Pack Item 13

Handout: The Cycle of Judges Sessions 8-11

Using a study Bible, Bible dictionary, or other resource, create an article that describes the recurring “cycle of sin” found in the book of Judges. The cycle should include sin, punishment, supplication, and deliverance.

Pack Item 14

Handout: The Kinsman-Redeemer Session 13

Using a study Bible, Bible dictionary, or other resource, create an article that explains the various roles of the kinsman-redeemer in ancient Israel. Connect the concept to the events of the book of Ruth.

The Oppressors in Judges

Because of their sin, the Israelites suffered under the rule of several cruel nations during the time of the judges. These nations included the following:

THE OPPRESSOR	HISTORY IN JUDGES	ISRAEL'S DELIVERER/JUDGE
The Mesopotamians	A Mesopotamian king subdued Israel for a time during the period of the judges (Judg. 3:8).	Othniel
The Moabites	The story of Ehud and Eglon illustrated conflict (Judg. 3:15-30), while the Ammonites and Moabites in Ruth lived in peace (Ruth 4:13-22).	Ehud
The Ammonites	The Ammonites laid claim to all the territory in Moab as far south as the Arnon (Judg. 11:13), while the book of Joshua makes the same claim for Israel (13:15-26).	Ehud, Jephthah, Issachar, Dan, Aodan
The Amalekites	The atrocities attributed to Esau's descendants (Gen. 36:2) led Saul to direct Saul to destroy Amalek (1 Sam. 15:2-3).	Ehud
The Canaanites	The book of Judges (see Josh. 9:1-2; 10:1-5) indicates that Canaanite kings could form coalitions against Israel, but none had the power to unite all Canaan. In Judges 4-5, Deborah and Barak fought the Canaanites. However, the Canaanites and Israelites gradually melted together, a phenomenon essentially completed by the end of David's rule.	Deborah and Barak
The Midianites	In the time of the judges, the Midianites and Amalekites used camels to carry out fast-paced raids against Israel. Gideon drove them out and killed their leaders (Judg. 6-8).	Gideon, Tola, Jair
The Philistines	The most dramatic phase of Philistine history begins in the period of the judges, when the Philistines were the principal enemy of and the major political threat to Israel. This threat is first seen in the stories of Samson (Judg. 13-16), but it intensified as the Philistines encroached on the territory of Dan, forcing the tribe to move north (see Judg. 18:11,29).	Samson

LEADER PACK SAMPLE POSTER

COMING NEXT QUARTER



Romans

Session 1: **True Power** (Romans 1:13-25)

Session 2: **Coming Judgment** (Romans 2:1-13)

Session 3: **Saving Faith** (Romans 3:21-4:5)

Session 4: **Restored Relationship** (Romans 5:1-11,18-21)

Session 5: **Freedom** (Romans 6:1-14)

Session 6: **Struggle** (Romans 7:4-6,14-25)

Session 7: **Indwelt** (Romans 8:14-27)

Session 8: **Believe** (Romans 9:30-10:3,9-17)

Session 9: **Kindness** (Romans 11:11-24)

Session 10: **Sacrifice** (Romans 12:1-13)

Session 11: **Represent** (Romans 13:1-14)

Session 12: **Unity** (Romans 14:5-20)

Session 13: **Purpose** (Romans 15:14-21,30-33)

Explore

“You will seek me and find me when you search for me
with all your heart.” Jeremiah 29:13

THE CONQUEST OF CANAAN



"The Conquest of Canaan" is adapted from "The Conquest of the Promised Land," *The Old Testament Bible Handbook* (Holman Reference, 2023), p. 79. Used with permission.

JOSHUA; JUDGES; RUTH

In this life, leaders come, and leaders go. No matter who we are or what we do, we answer to a leader one way or another. In fact, the question really isn't if we will follow a leader, but what kind of leader we will choose. The biblical history books of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth examine the highs and lows of leadership. While Joshua celebrates the blessings of leadership at its best, Judges offers a cautionary tale of leadership gone wrong. And Ruth reminds us that even in the worst of times, God is still at work, raising leaders from the most unlikely of places. By studying Joshua, Judges, and Ruth, we see leadership from every angle—and we're challenged to reserve our ultimate loyalty for our ultimate Leader.

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