

### A SENSITIVE REMINDER

Last Week, we discussed the importance of reminders as leaders were selected to carry stones out of the Jordan river's dry bed to build a memorial. This Week, in Joshua chapter 5, we are examining the beginning and end of the chapter. However, that doesn't mean the middle isn't important. In fact, it's in the middle section that the second generation of Israelites experience two reminders God established with his people so that they would not forget the promise to Abraham, through circumcision, and the promise to Moses, with Passover.

God established circumcision as the physical sign of the Abrahamic Covenant. That means when an Israelite boy is born, he has a minor, but sensitive, operation to remove his foreskin. It would appear *none* of the second-generation Israelites had done this minor, but sensitive, procedure. So, the time had come and all the men were circumcised.

Circumcision reminds each man that he is a son of Abraham. Every time he uses the restroom, he is reminded. Every time he changes clothes or bathes, he is reminded. Every time he and his wife celebrate marriage physically, they are both reminded. And, should this man commit sexual sin, he cannot escape this particular reminder.

As we said last Week, reminders are critical. God gave these grown men a very sensitive reminder before they headed into battle—they are his. Every part of them is his.

#### JOSHUA 5:1, 13–15

<sup>1</sup> As soon as all the kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan to the west, and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea, heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan for the people of Israel until they had crossed over, their hearts melted and there was no longer any spirit in them because of the people of Israel.

<sup>13</sup> When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" <sup>14</sup> And he said, "No; but I am the commander of the army of the Lord. Now I have come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, "What does my lord say to his servant?" <sup>15</sup> And the commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, "Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Although we dealt with circumcision only in the introduction, it's a curious part of the Bible as well as today's chapter. In the New Testament, we learn in Romans 2 that "*circumcision is a matter of the heart.*" God intended it as a heart-shaping reminder, rather than simply a physical action.

For more information on how circumcision applies to the heart through Christ, scan the QR code.



### DISCUSSION

When was the last time you felt encouraged about something? What was it and from whom?

ICEBREAKER  
OBSERVATION

1. Who is introduced? What did they hear? Describe their response? (1)

2. What did Joshua ask and how did the stranger ID himself? (13b–14)

3. How did Joshua respond to this introduction? (14b)

4. Why do you think these kings responded as they did? Do you think Joshua knew they felt this way? (1)

5. Do you think this encounter left Joshua fearful or emboldened? Why? (13–15)

INTERPRETATION

6. How has God encouraged you to fight for him through this study?

APPLICATION

Maybe you're in a place where you need encouragement. You feel like you need God to speak. God has given you his Word and others to help you understand it. Talk to your coach today.

# VICTORY!

WEEK 5

A STUDY OF JOSHUA

## STUDY NOTES

### THE NAME ON THE FRONT

One of the greatest sports *victories* of all time inspired one of the greatest sports *movies* of all time... "Miracle" (2004). At the 1980 Olympics, the US Hockey Team defeated the highly-favored Soviets. America's Coach, Herb Brooks, didn't start with a team, only a collection of the country's best collegiate players. They never played together. Worse, many had played *against* each other and their intense personal hatred led to disunity, even outright *brawls*.

In the pivotal scene, Coach Brooks had each player introduce themselves by answering, "What's your name?" "Where are you from?" and "Who do you play for?" Each player responded with their name, hometown, and their college team. In between their responses, Brooks had the whole team sprint from one end of the rink to the other and back. The drill, bordering on cruelty, continued for *hours*.

Finally, amid gasping teammates, an exhausted but convicted voice rose behind the pack from the team captain, "Mike Eruzione! [pant, pant]. Winthrop, Massachusetts." Brooks posed the final question, "Who do you play for?" "I play for [pant, pant] THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA!" Immediately satisfied, Coach Brooks ended the drill. For the riveting 3-minute clip, scan the QR code.



Ultimately, this team needed to learn that the name on the front of their jerseys mattered more than the name on the back. Although Israel didn't wear jerseys, obedience to God's Law united them. There were a multitude of people from 12 distinct tribes united under one Law given by the One God. They were called out and set apart from all other people—they were holy.

### VICTORY REQUIRES IDENTITY

Joshua chapter 5 shows the realignment of God's people under God's Law. In this critical moment, the people acknowledged that their past success and future success depended on the Lord alone.

The inhabitants of the Promised Land took note. ***As soon as all the kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan to the west, and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea, heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan for the people of Israel until they had crossed over, their hearts melted and there was no longer any spirit in them because of the people of Israel.***

It was not by Israel's ingenuity that they crossed the Jordan. It was the Lord. The fighting spirit in Israel's enemies was gone.

After Israel was circumcised and Passover had ended, Joshua took a moment to look on the fortified city he would soon take in battle. He probably didn't know how afraid his enemies were. Perhaps he was drawing up battle plans as the men of Israel continued to heal from the minor, but sensitive, procedure. In this moment of solitude that Joshua met a mysterious stranger.

***When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?"*** This was a very important question considering all of the fighting men might have still been healing. Joshua was on his own if this guy wanted trouble.

Thankfully, the man responded, ***"No; but I am the commander of the army of the Lord. Now I have come."*** Joshua responded by bowing and worshiping. He asked the critical question, ***"What does my lord say to his servant?"*** to which the ***commander*** replied, ***"Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy."***

### IDENTITY INTENSIFIES RELATIONALLY

Joshua had the loneliest job in Israel. He was called to lead. He readily understood that he led at the Lord's command and any victory was the Lord's. Crossing the Jordan was just one example of God's faithfulness. However, the fact that Joshua was scoping out Jericho likely meant that the question nagged him, "Would God be faithful with *this*?"

You and I may ask this question often. Joshua was visited by the commander of the Lord's army, which we might assume was a manifestation of the Lord himself telling him that his enemies' hearts had melted. And although we might not receive the same kind of response, none of us have been asked to lead a nation and reclaim a Promised Land either.

Just because we haven't seen God, doesn't mean he hasn't shown in our lives. As we look in our past, we can see God's faithfulness. This provides an important reminder that we must celebrate what the Lord has done, but seek his presence for what the Lord is doing.

As Christians, we are identified with Christ. His name covers the front of our jersey. In a world of confusion, our relationship with him (often experienced with other believers) provides and intensifies our identity.

Joshua felt alone and the Lord met him there. Faithfulness to Christ can feel lonely at times. However, you are never alone. God and God's people are there for you before every battle.