

# VICTORY!

ZERO WEEK

## A STUDY OF JOSHUA

### NEXT MAN UP

John Wooden left UCLA after their 10<sup>th</sup> NCAA basketball championship in 12 years. Vince Lombardi left the Packers after they won the first two Super Bowls. Indeed, today's college basketball Player of the Year and Super Bowl winners receive trophies named after these two men respectively. Can you imagine being their "replacement"?

Phil Bengston, who succeeded Lombardi in 1968, noted, "It might be better off to be the coach who replaces the coach who replaced the legend." No doubt Joshua felt the same.

If you know the Bible, you've heard of Moses. He stood before Pharaoh in Egypt and cried out, "Let my people go!" 10 plagues later, Pharaoh sent Israel packing. Moses led a nation of slaves to freedom and did great and mighty things through the Lord. For 40 years, he led this new nation.

Our study begins as the baton was passed. Joshua had been with Moses the last 40 year, but as the saying goes, "Heavy is the head that wears the crown." Now, it's Joshua's time to lead.

#### YOURS, MINE, AND OURS

MOSES	JOSHUA
Born in Israel's captivity (Ex 2:2)	Born in Israel's captivity (Nu 11:28)
Called by God (Ex 3)	Called by God (Dt 31)
Given promise & boundaries (Dt 11:24)	Given promise & boundaries (Jo 1:3-4)
Present when God gave Law (Ex 19-31)	Present when God gave Law (Ex 32:17)
Waters of Red Sea part (Ex 14)	Waters of Jordan River part (Jo 3:14-17)
Called Israel to obey Law (Dt 4:1-2)	Called Israel to obey Law (Jo 8:34-35)
Sent spies into the Land (Nu 13-14)	Sent Spies into the Land (Jo 2:1)
Final challenging speech (Dt 29-30)	Final challenging speech (Jo 23-24)

JOSHUA 1:1-5

<sup>1</sup> After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant,

<sup>2</sup> "Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. <sup>3</sup> Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses. <sup>4</sup> From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory. <sup>5</sup> No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Every Week of this study, there will be more that we *could* discuss, than we are *able* to discuss. Much of the richness and depth of *Joshua* is found through the context in which it was written that helps us understand what we're reading.

Due to this limitation, we will provide this "Additional Resources" section to fill-in some of those gaps. For instance, scan the QR code for a great 10-minute video summary of *Joshua*.



### DISCUSSION

Who has been one of your favorite leaders, teachers, or coaches? Why?

1. What is the timeframe of these events? (1)

2. How are Moses and Joshua described? (1)

3. What is the scope of God's promise regarding the Land? (3-5)

4. Why might God have used the past tense ("have given") to describe his Land gift? (3)

5. How might God's promises and presence have affected Joshua's courage? Why? (5)

6. What battle do you face right now that requires godly courage?

Every team needs a coach to succeed. Even professional athletes have a coach. Thankfully, you have a coach willing to invest in you. Need help with a spiritual battle you're facing right now? Talk to your coach today.

ICEBREAKER

OBSERVATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

# VICTORY!

ZERO WEEK

## A STUDY OF JOSHUA

## STUDY NOTES

### JOSHUA

Joshua learned how to obey as Moses' servant before he commanded as Israel's general (Numbers 11:28). From Exodus through Numbers—40 years before entering the Promised Land—Joshua shadowed Moses. He accompanied Moses to Mt. Sinai as the Lord's finger inscribed his Law onto the tablets. Joshua regularly accompanied Moses when he met the LORD in the Tabernacle. Beyond this blessing and privilege with Moses, Joshua wanted a closer relationship with the Lord. Therefore, even after Moses left God's presence each time, Joshua remained, extending his own time with God (Exodus 33:11).

Later, Moses sent out 12 spies to the Promised Land, one from each tribe. One, named "Hoshea" was sent from the tribe of Ephraim. Moses renamed him "Joshua" meaning "deliverer" (Numbers 13:16). The name stuck. After seeing their enemies firsthand, only he and Caleb believed God would give them victory (Numbers 14:38).

As you might guess, it wasn't all rainbows and sunshine leading Israel. Again, *only* Joshua and Caleb believed God would give Israel the Land. The 10 other spies were too afraid. Israel didn't trust God, so God told them they would wander in the wilderness for 40 years until the first generation passed away and the second generation took the Land. At every turn, the people complained, disobeyed, and fought amongst themselves. Leading that kind of team is no fun at all—just ask your coach. Despite the difficulties, as we will see, Joshua was the right man for the job.

### WHAT IS JOSHUA ABOUT?

As we have said, the book of *Joshua* begins **after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord**. Moses didn't die among his people. Deuteronomy 34 records that God showed Moses the Promised Land, but he was unable to enter it. So, God had to tell Joshua of Moses' passing. **The Lord said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, "Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses."**

The book of *Joshua* is about the man, Joshua leading Israel on a military campaign to cross the Jordan River and settle Israel into the Promised Land. We call it the "Promised Land,"

because it's the land God promised to Abraham over 400 years before.

Genesis 15 records God's promise—that Abraham's descendants would be enslaved for 400 years, then set free to take the land in which Abraham presently lived. Joshua got to lead the nation to receive that promise, but he wasn't alone. God assured Joshua, ***Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.***

### WHY STUDY JOSHUA

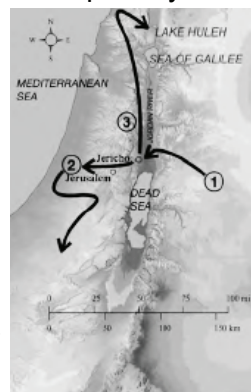
Joshua records one of the most critical successions in world history, overflowing with illustrations of Joshua's character, skill, and deep passion for God. What a vital model for any person's future—both personally and professionally!

Joshua illustrates battle preparation, leadership strategies (including wisdom and character), and emotion management—whether winning or losing. We'll see modeled transferrable principles of succession, enabling you to bless those *before* you, *after* you, and *with* you. We're all familiar with the concept of "leaving something better than you found it," but how do we actually do that spiritually and relationally?

Spiritual battles are anything that must be won to further your obedience to Christ (1 Corinthians 10:31). What do you need to start or stop doing to have or maintain victory?

Identify a spiritual battle(s) you face right now. Ask brothers or sisters in Christ who are close to you—maybe even a little older. It could be anxiety, addiction, or a character issue. Next, what "land" (blessing) will God likely provide upon your victory? It could be a better relationship with someone, his peace, more joy, or a closer walk with the Lord. Pray that God would use *Joshua* to provide you with wisdom. Victory, for the Christian, is doing God's will and enjoying its blessings.

Take a look at the map to see Joshua's battle plan to take the Land. Maybe you need to map out your spiritual battle plan by taking some time this week to write down what God is asking you to do (be specific), what you're going to do (what, where & when?), and what you hope to see change as a result (how will you measure success?). Occasionally, we will ask about your battle plan over the course of the study. It's not enough to simply *read* about God's warrior. It's time to *fight* the fight God has for you!



### BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS

Three times in this short section, God repeats this command to Joshua—**“Be strong and courageous”**—it seems like this might be important. Like we discussed last Week, Joshua had a first-hand look at Moses and the frustration of leading stubborn, disobedient people. Joshua now led the *second* generation, the *kids* of those who escaped slavery in Egypt. This *second* generation had learned some important lessons through their parents’ failures, but the journey was not complete. They had the promise of a special land, a home for their people. Now all they had to do was take it.

Outside of maybe, *“I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength,”* “Be strong and courageous” might be the most used Bible quote in sports. It’s not bad to remind ourselves of this command to Joshua in moments when we need a little fortitude and grit (especially if we remember the source of our strength and courage is God alone). However, we’ll see in our study that the strength and courage required to play hard and win athletically pales in comparison to what God has in store for Joshua. He’s about to stare down superior armies, fortified cities, and taking a populated land of people, who because of their own sin, would not simply be removed, but killed. But, not without a fight.

#### JOSHUA 1:6–11

<sup>6</sup>Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. <sup>7</sup>Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. <sup>8</sup>This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. <sup>9</sup>Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”

<sup>10</sup>And Joshua commanded the officers of the people, <sup>11</sup>“Pass through the midst of the camp and command the people, ‘Prepare your provisions, for within three days you are to pass over this Jordan to go in to take possession of the land that the LORD your God is giving you to possess.’”

#### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Usually we use this section for one of two purposes: to provide extra material or background relevant to our study. Or, to provide a worship/spiritual connection to what we have studied.

Today’s QR code is different. It features legendary basketball coach, John Wooden. In this 18 minute video is nugget after nugget of life wisdom. I hope this clip inspires you to lead—you’re never too young to lead. You can make a difference in someone’s life starting right now.



### DISCUSSION

What is your most unforgettable experience of the of the last school year?

1. What did God command? How many times in verses 6-9?

2. How would Joshua express his strength and courage? (7-8a)

3. What else did God command or promise? (8b-9)

4. Why do you think God repeated this one command so often? (6-9)

5. Which of God’s promises gives you courage? Why?

6. Why is it important for you to stay in God’s Word as it relates to the above promise?

What are you hoping God will do this year? Perhaps you’re curious about a relationship with Christ. Perhaps you’re ready to lead. Whatever is next for you, talk to your coach today.

# VICTORY!

WEEK 1

## A STUDY OF JOSHUA

### STUDY NOTES OUT OF BOUNDS

“Out of bounds!” What a terrible phrase for an offensive player to hear. How many times have we seen a super-human football catch, only to have a finger or toe touch out of bounds?

God told Joshua, **“Be strong and courageous.”** It would take vast amounts of each to stay in-bounds for what God had in store for Joshua and the nation of Israel. God told Joshua, **“You shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them.”** A weak leader would buckle under the physical, social, emotional, and spiritual demands of this mission. Failure was not an option—this team *had* to stay in-bounds or face dire consequences.

God did not provide Joshua with a road map to see the whole journey beginning to end with all the hills, valleys, and pit-stops. God’s direction was more like a GPS, giving out directions as they appear. To fulfill God’s mission Joshua would have to stay in-bounds on every turn, relying on God’s promise to him. God didn’t give Joshua explanations as to how he would accomplish these things, because God’s people live on promises, not explanations.

### VICTORY REQUIRES COURAGE

Although God promised to provide direction along the way, it was through his Word he provided the boundaries. God elevated his command **“Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go.”** Turning any direction aside from the Lord’s Law was out of bounds. Failure would be easy. Victory required courage.

How did God tell Joshua to stay in-bounds according to the Law? ***This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it.*** God specifically referred to the books written by Moses—the first five books of our Bible. However, for us, these words still hold true regarding Scripture, both Old and New Testaments. We should speak the Word, meditate on the Word, and continually bury it in our hearts and minds.

God made a promise to Joshua for obeying his Word, **“For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.”** This was a promise to Joshua, not to us. However, God created and ordered the world such that

living according to his word brings blessing. Christians don’t believe in karma. God’s design means that if we sow wisdom, we often reap success. As my pastor often says, “Things just work better when you do them God’s way.”

Again, God repeats ***Be strong and courageous.*** Strength and courage are not *feelings*. They are *choices* we can make or not make. God can command Joshua to be strong and courageous because Joshua can choose to obey or disobey. To drive home this very point, God added to that command by forbidding the opposite, **“Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”**

### COURAGE COMES FROM GOD’S PROMISE

As we open our study, Joshua faced a call to lead. Thankfully, the people responded. They told Joshua later in verse 16, **“Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you.”** Remember, these are the *children* of those freed Egyptian slaves who routinely and flagrantly disobeyed. This generation watched as the Lord caused their *parents* to wander for 38 years and die in the desert until only Joshua and Caleb survived. Through their parents’ failures, God taught them an essential lesson that obedience to God was necessary to receive his blessings.

Embracing the mantle of leadership ***Joshua commanded the officers of the people, “Pass through the midst of the camp and command the people, ‘Prepare your provisions, for within three days you are to pass over this Jordan to go in to take possession of the land that the LORD your God is giving you to possess.’”*** Joshua believed and trusted God’s promise. He was ready to lead.

As we open our study, I know we have several types of readers. Some of you may be cracking open a Bible for the first time. You might just now be exploring God’s Words and his promises. We’re glad you’re here. We hope that you’ll see God’s truth and that your life is forever changed.

Some of you know God’s promises, but you’re “frightened and dismayed” at what it might cost of you to live sold out for Christ. You know the thing God is asking you to stop or start doing. Victory requires courage.

Likewise, others of you this semester trust God’s promise and will be called to lead. Where you walk, others will follow. I would challenge you this semester to run hard after Christ and challenge yourself to see others know him as well. Hear God’s command to Joshua, **“Be strong and courageous.”**

### THE RIGHT THING

When Jackie Robinson took the field in April of 1947, the Reds fans and players let loose their hate. In response, Dodger captain, Pee Wee Reese, raised a hand, walked from shortstop to 1st base, and put an arm around Jackie Robinson's shoulders. Standing there, he looked into the dugout and the stands, staring into the hate. Reese never spoke. His deed was beyond words. Later, Robinson recalled, "After Pee Wee came over like that, I never felt alone on a baseball field."

As Joshua planned his military campaign, he sent two spies into the land to check out their first objective—the city of Jericho. These two unnamed spies went to the sketchy part of town for information and found themselves at the house of a prostitute named Rahab. The king found out about their presence and sent men to find them. Rahab hid the spies in the roof of her house and sent the king's men off in the wrong direction.

Rahab took a risk to save foreign invaders. In today's passage, the coast was clear, and we discover why. Like Pee Wee, she didn't have to do such a thing—however, both understood that, despite their differences, their actions were the right thing to do.

#### JOSHUA 2:8–14

<sup>8</sup> Before the men lay down, she came up to them on the roof<sup>9</sup> and said to the men, "I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. <sup>10</sup> For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction. <sup>11</sup> And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the LORD your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.

<sup>12</sup> Now then, please swear to me by the LORD that, as I have dealt kindly with you, you also will deal kindly with my father's house, and give me a sure sign <sup>13</sup> that you will save alive my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and deliver our lives from death."

<sup>14</sup> And the men said to her, "Our life for yours even to death! If you do not tell this business of ours, then when the LORD gives us the land we will deal kindly and faithfully with you."

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

God safely delivered Israel to the opposite shore after parting the Red Sea. Exodus 14:31 says, "*Israel saw the great power that the Lord used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the Lord, and they believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.*"

The "fear of the Lord" expressed saving faith in the Old Testament. In chapter 15, the people sang in worship. Rightly viewing God drives us to worship him. Scan the QR code to join in the worship of the Lord.



### DISCUSSION

How would you define the word "fear?" What is something you think people *should* be afraid of?

1. What does Rahab say about...(9–11)  
the Lord?  
  
the population?  
  
the Israelites?

2. What does she ask of the spies? (12–13)

3. How did the men respond? (14)

4. What do Rahab's words about God, her people, the Israelites, and her family say about her faith? (9–13)

5. In what ways did the "fear of the Lord" create mutual trust among Rahab and the spies?

6. How has correctly placed "fear of the Lord" changed your life?

Misplaced fear leads to putting other things in front of our true Savior, Jesus. Maybe you're struggling with something along these lines. If you need help, talk to your coach today.

# VICTORY!

WEEK 2

## A STUDY OF JOSHUA

### STUDY NOTES ROWDY

We've all seen that player who seems to do everything they can to find trouble. Coach gives opportunity after opportunity for correction, but this player's disrespect and self-destruction leads to no other choice. Coach must remove the player from the team.

God made an incredible promise to Abraham that he would give his descendants the Promised Land. However, God told Abraham that his descendants would be enslaved for 400 years *before* they could take the land. We might ask, "Why doesn't God just give the land now?" The answer God gave, "*the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete*" (Genesis 15:16). This means that the inhabitants of the land had not yet sinned enough to get kicked out.

The inhabitants were like the petulant teammate, they were bad and getting worse. They were given multiple opportunities to make a correction. At the end of 400 years, God displayed incredible power delivering Israel from Egypt. Not only that, the fame of Israel and her God grew for the 40 years they wandered in the desert. The inhabitants of the land were given 400 years, plus 40, to fear Israel's God, humble themselves, and turn from their wicked ways. However, in that time, they only sank deeper into sin and fortified their resolve to fight back against God.

At this point, as God knew they would, they crossed an invisible threshold of judgment and God would use the nation of Israel to remove them from the land—except for one family. As we will see in our passage today, there was one family that learned the lesson 440 years in the making.

### VICTORY REQUIRES TEAMWORK

Rahab had hidden the spies and sent the king's men on a "snipe hunt." The coast was clear and they were going to rest for the night. ***Before the men lay down, she came up to them on the roof.*** Rahab lived in Jericho and probably did not want to see it destroyed. However, there was something she feared more than the destruction of her city by foreign invaders—God.

Rahab told them men, ***"I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to***

***Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction. And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the LORD your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.***

Rahab's words illustrated she understood several things—first, she recognized the reality and power of Israel's God. Israel wasn't *taking* the land. Rahab rightly understood the Lord was *giving* it to them. Additionally, she understood God's power through the miracle of the Red Sea and Exodus from Egypt. Only God could have allowed slaves to defeat what was probably the most powerful nation on earth at the time.

Secondly, she understood the correct response. Although fear had fallen on Jericho and their hearts "melted," only Rahab humbled herself before the Lord. The book of *Proverbs* repeats the phrase, "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.*" Like us, the people of Jericho probably feared losing their lives, their wealth, their successes—they feared something they could defeat. They thought they could fight back. Only Rahab understood that they're fighting the Lord, and they won't win.

### TEAMWORK GROWS WITH MUTUAL TRUST

Rahab sought protection, asking, ***"Please swear to me by the LORD that, as I have dealt kindly with you, you also will deal kindly with my father's house... deliver our lives from death."*** For her assistance, the men agreed and, as we will see in several chapters, Rahab was spared.

Rahab's fear was correctly placed and her trust in the Lord solidified her place in the lineage of Jesus himself (Matthew 1:5). Jesus said in Matthew 10:28, ***"Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell."*** Rahab understood the difference. Do you?

Many of us deal with "misplaced fear." If the things we fear most are driving a beater car, losing a starting position, being single, bad grades, etc., the our savior is a nice car, the starting lineup, a boy/girlfriend, or all A's. These fears control us—when we win, we're on top of the world. When we don't, we're miserable. If our fear isn't sin and torment in Hell, then any savior will do. However, if our fear is sin and torment in Hell, then *only* Jesus can save.

Not only does God save us through correcting our fears, but it also frees us to live boldly for him. When we fear God above all else, nothing, and I mean *nothing*, can stop us.

### THE RIGHT WAY

“Wrong Way” Marshall earned his nickname on a scoop and score fumble recovery. He ran 50+ yards, untouched, to score a safety for the other team. Only when he was thanked by a 49er, did he realize his mistake.

Holiness means to be “set apart.” In Joshua 3, Israel was told to stay at least a half-mile away from God’s ark. By doing so, not only did they maintain its “set-aparthood,” but it also provided protection and direction by keeping it on one side.

Today, as we see Israel cross the Jordan in the Promised Land, they enter new territory. When the people didn’t know where to go, they simply had to look at the ark. Not only did God use the ark to hold back a raging, frigid river, but he also used it to keep a multitude of people all moving the correct direction. Holiness is always the right way.

#### JOSHUA 3:10–17

<sup>10</sup> And Joshua said, “Here is how you shall know that the living God is among you and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, and the Jebusites. <sup>11</sup> Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is passing over before you into the Jordan. <sup>12</sup> Now therefore take twelve men from the tribes of Israel, from each tribe a man. <sup>13</sup> And when the soles of the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off from flowing, and the waters coming down from above shall stand in one heap.”

<sup>14</sup> So when the people set out from their tents to pass over the Jordan with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people, <sup>15</sup> and as soon as those bearing the ark had come as far as the Jordan, and the feet of the priests bearing the ark were dipped in the brink of the water (now the Jordan overflows all its banks throughout the time of harvest), <sup>16</sup> the waters coming down from above stood and rose up in a heap very far away, at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan, and those flowing down toward the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. And the people passed over opposite Jericho. <sup>17</sup> Now the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firmly on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan, and all Israel was passing over on dry ground until all the nation finished passing over the Jordan.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Isn't the ark a huge boat filled with animals? Well, yes, that's *Noah's Ark*. However, in Exodus 25, we read the building instructions for the Ark of the Covenant—a *much* smaller box.

The Ark of the Covenant was covered with gold and had two statues of cherubs. Inside, it contained the 10 Commandments, a pot of manna, and Aaron's rod. Like Noah's Ark, it was a vessel for temporary deliverance, pointing to the ultimate fulfillment in Christ. For more, scan the QR code.



### DISCUSSION

If you could pick one fictional character to hang out with for a day, who would it be and why?

1. What did Joshua say God would do and what proof did he offer? (10–11, 13)

2. What people or groups do we see mentioned in this passage and what was their experience? (10, 12, 13, 14, 16)

3. In your own words, what do the actions of those mentioned here say about their faith? (14–17)

4. Which group do you most identify with? What about that group do you see in yourself?

Do you agree with the statement, “Every person has faith?” Maybe you’re struggling with faith and feel like you have none at all. Maybe your faith is misplaced. Talk to your coach today.

ICEBREAKER

OBSERVATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

## STUDY NOTES

### THE CROSSING

On June 6<sup>th</sup>, 1944 Operation Overlord—later called “D-Day”—involved 156,000 American, British, and Canadian forces landing on 5 heavily fortified beaches across a 50-mile stretch of Northwestern France. By June 11<sup>th</sup>, over 326,000 troops, more than 50,000 vehicles, and about 100,000 tons of equipment had landed at Normandy. Before the month ended, the Allies had transported over 850,000 men and 150,000 vehicles into France, all poised against the Nazis.

Remarkably, these stats were achieved by crossing 100 miles of water. To overcome the frigid waters of the English Channel, the Allies used over 5,000 ships and landing craft as well as over 11,000 aircraft. There were advance paratroopers, a tremendous fake-out using one of America’s most famous generals called “Operation Fortitude,” and a host of other things that allowed D-Day to give the Allies a foothold in Europe.

Over 3000 years before D-Day, Joshua had to overcome a similar situation. He had no paratroopers, no boats or aircraft, and no ploys to fake out the enemy. All he had was a nation needing to cross a river in order to fight. The Jordan river was ½ mile wide and 150 feet deep—an impossible obstacle. However, to take the Promised Land, they had to trust the Promise-Maker. Faith isn’t focusing on what you *don’t* have, it’s trust in the One you *do* have.

### VICTORY REQUIRES FAITH

As we said in Week 1, God didn’t give Joshua a road-map showing him where and how he would arrive at his destination. God gave turn-by-turn navigation and, like a malfunctioning GPS, God told him to “turn left” into a huge river. Instead of “Recalculating,” the Lord said through Joshua, ***“Here is how you shall know that the living God is among you and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, and the Jebusites”*** (aka the “7-ites”)

Leaders were selected to lead each tribe across the river—***twelve men from the tribes of Israel, from each tribe a man***. The Lord continued his promise, ***“and when the soles of the feet of the priests bearing the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off from flowing, and the waters coming down from above shall stand in one heap.”***

The people got to work without grumbling and with all haste. Then, ***as soon as those bearing***

***the ark had come as far as the Jordan, and the feet of the priests bearing the ark were dipped in the brink of the water, the waters coming down from above stood and rose up in a heap very far away.*** Not only did the water stop flowing, but it was the time of year that it typically overflowed.

The first generation that fled Egypt crossed the Red Sea on dry ground. So also, while ***the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firmly on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan, and all Israel was passing over on dry ground until all the nation finished passing over the Jordan.***

### FAITH CONQUERS THE IMPOSSIBLE

Several examples of faith jump off the page. *First*, Joshua had the faith to proclaim what the Lord had told him. God’s GPS seemed to have malfunctioned. Yet, Joshua stood firm in his conviction that God never commanded wrong turns or detours.

*Second*, the priests had the faith to go first. The flooding of the Jordan came from melting snow from Mt. Hermon. They dipped their tootsies into the frigid water, standing in the gap for those who would follow.

*Third*, the nation and the twelve selected men had to have the faith to cross a riverbed that, moments before, would have sent them into a hypothermic watery grave. They didn’t have the luxury of believing God for a moment. Every step of their half-mile journey meant trusting God to restrain the torrent.

*Finally*, we see the faith of the “7-ites.” We might say that these nations had no faith at all. However, that’s inaccurate. Every person has faith. The “7-ites” heard what God did to Egypt. They saw him provide for Israel 40 years in the wilderness. They had already heard of other nations getting crushed. Now, the people of **Adam** bore witness to heaps of water, while **Jericho** prayed that it might flow freely to prevent the Israelites heading their way.

Israel crossing the Jordan gave one more opportunity for the “7-ites” to turn to Israel’s God. Instead, their faith remained in themselves. That faith cannot stop God. However, faith in God conquers the impossible. Hasn’t God done enough to get our attention?

Do we have faith in God’s Word like Joshua? Do we have faith to go first like the priests or to stand in the gap for others? Do we realize that every step is an act of faith—expressing either our faith in God or our faith in ourselves? Holiness provides protection and direction, but faith is what moves us forward to conquer the impossible.

### THE RING

Wedding rings symbolize marriage. School rings symbolize a connection and academic achievement. A championship ring symbolizes a team of winners. Each ring is exclusive and bonds people together.

These rings provide a constant reminder of a pinnacle moment in the life of the ring-holder. Often, when the ring is noticed by others, it's accompanied by the story of its obtaining. It's not the ring, but the *story* about the ring that makes it so special.

As we will see today, God gives his people reminders because the stories of his faithfulness are special and must be remembered. We will face ups and downs. We will face seasons of uncertainty. Remembering God's past faithfulness assures us the he is able to save, rescue, heal, and redeem. If God was faithful then, he will be faithful now.

#### JOSHUA 4:1–7, 21–24

<sup>1</sup> When all the nation had finished passing over the Jordan, the Lord said to Joshua, <sup>2</sup> “Take twelve men from the people, from each tribe a man, <sup>3</sup> and command them, saying, ‘Take twelve stones from here out of the midst of the Jordan, from the very place where the priests’ feet stood firmly, and bring them over with you and lay them down in the place where you lodge tonight.’” <sup>4</sup> Then Joshua called the twelve men from the people of Israel, whom he had appointed, a man from each tribe. <sup>5</sup> And Joshua said to them, “Pass on before the ark of the Lord your God into the midst of the Jordan, and take up each of you a stone upon his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the people of Israel, <sup>6</sup> that this may be a sign among you. When your children ask in time to come, ‘What do those stones mean to you?’ <sup>7</sup> then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. When it passed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. So these stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial forever.”

<sup>21</sup> And he said to the people of Israel, “When your children ask their fathers in times to come, ‘What do these stones mean?’ <sup>22</sup> then you shall let your children know, ‘Israel passed over this Jordan on dry ground.’”

<sup>23</sup> For the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan for you until you passed over, as the Lord your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up for us until we passed over, <sup>24</sup> so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty, that you may fear the Lord your God forever.”

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Reminders are important, but what are we trying to remember? We might need to remember many things—from homework to the playbook. However, the main thing all of us need to remember is who we are and who God is. How we define these two things shape everything about us. That's why it's important to get it right every single day.

Scan the QR code for a great article on Ten Big Daily Reminders that we should all focus on every day.



### DISCUSSION

If you could pick one fictional character to hang out with for a day, who would it be and why?

1. When does this passage occur? (1)

2. What command did Joshua follow from God? (2–5)

3. How would this memorial be used? (6–7, 21–24)

4. Why might the Lord have specifically assigned the 12 leaders to carry these stones? (2–5)

5. What reminders do you use to practice remembering what God has done? Is there anything you need to start or stop doing?

Hard lessons, like carrying giant stones, aren't quickly forgotten. Maybe God has or is taking you through something hard to teach you. If you aren't sure, talk to your coach today.

## STUDY NOTES REMEMBER



Most Americans recognize this picture. Built out of bronze in 1954, the statue of five marines and one sailor remembers and honors the heroism required to raise the American flag atop Mt. Suribachi on Iwo Jima during World War II. More generally, the statue honors all Marines who have fought for freedom since their first battle in 1775.

Why bother with a statue that cost hundreds of thousands of dollars, took over 3 years to construct, and weighs over 100 tons? It is worth it to remember their sacrifice for duty, honor, and country. It's worth it to remember what it takes to remain free. It's worth it to remember a story that would inspire future generations to sacrifice for duty, honor, and country.

The power of remembering is why a nation sets aside holidays, conducts parades, and establishes museums. It's why a school hangs plaques, displays trophies, and names stadiums after those who excelled in carrying out its ideals.

The Lord designed us so that we might remember, not the great things we have done, but the great things *he* has done. As we return to the story of Joshua, the Lord established a memorial so that his people would never forget what he did that day.

## VICTORY REQUIRES REMEMBERING

As we saw last Week, the Lord delivered Israel across the Jordan River. Although the river was normally overflowing at this time of the year,  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile wide and 150 feet deep, the Lord stopped the water and the people walked on dry land.

Our story continues as ***all the nation had finished passing over the Jordan. The Lord commanded, "Take twelve men from the people, from each tribe a man, and command them, saying, 'Take twelve stones from here out of the midst of the Jordan, from the very place where the priests' feet stood firmly, and bring them over with you and lay them down in the place where you lodge tonight.'"***

The twelve men discussed here are likely the twelve that were selected in chapter three. They were told to ***"pass on before the ark of the Lord your God into the midst of the Jordan, and take up each of you a stone upon his shoulder."***

This wasn't a small rock in their palm, this was a large stone hefted on their shoulder. And not only did they have to carry it out the river

bed, they had to carry it to where they were "lodging." In Joshua 4:19, we discover that they "lodged" in Gilgal—8 miles away!

Want to make sure your leaders learn a lesson? Make them carry a huge stone on their back for 8 miles. They're not likely to forget the meaning of this moment anytime soon.

Again, why bother? The Lord clearly stated his purposes in stacking the stones from the Jordan—***that this may be a sign among you***. Additionally, the Lord said, ***"When your children ask in time to come, 'What do those stones mean to you?' then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord. When it passed over the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off. So these stones shall be to the people of Israel a memorial forever."*** Likewise, ***"so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty, that you may fear the Lord your God forever."***

## REMEMBERING INVOLVES REPETITION

It's amazing that the Lord knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows we forget quickly. He knows the power of sin and how it deceives us. Sin says, "I'm going to do what I think feels good right now without worrying about the future." In sin, we can't see the past and we can't predict the future—or at least sin makes us not care.

We are like the man in James 1:24–25 that, ***"looks intently at his natural face in the mirror,"*** who ***"looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like."*** For that reason, we must establish patterns of remembering so that it never strays too far from our hearts. How do we do this? The Lord has provided us with many opportunities for remembering him and what he has done.

*First*, as many have said, preach the gospel to yourself daily. We must spend time in God's Word and pray every day. No day goes by that we don't need God. Failing to spend time with him implicitly says, "Don't worry about it God, I got it. You have the day off."

*Second*, we should have weekly opportunities to dive deeper in God's Word both alone and in community (like this study). God uses the church and small group community to help remember.

*Lastly*, we celebrate yearly events like Christmas and Easter to remember Jesus. However, other annual events could be more personal to you.

Let us take these opportunities to remember so that we may be victorious in him.

### 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?

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)

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

ICEBREAKER

OBSERVATION

INTERPRETATION

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.

## 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.

### WAX ON, WAX OFF

Have you ever done a drill in practice that you think, "How will this help me to win?" Nothing pictures this better than the 80's classic, *The Karate Kid*. Mr. Miyagi agrees to train Daniel in karate, but instead, he has him do a bunch of chores.

Mr. Miyagi shows Daniel different ways of doing each chore—"Wax on, Wax off," "Paint the fence," etc. Eventually, Daniel gets fed up with the chores only to discover (spoiler alert) that Miyagi had been teaching him the whole time. Suddenly, painting and waxing meant something greater. Miyagi's instructions were always *clear*, but Daniel couldn't *understand* why.

Have you noticed a pattern in our study of Joshua yet? God says, "Go do this thing and I'll do my thing." God's instructions were always *clear*, but sometimes hard to *understand*. Today's instructions were clear, but they were just plain crazy. No longer was Israel *entering* the Land, now they were to set about *conquering* it. However, instead of a siege, God commanded a stroll.

#### JOSHUA 6:15–21, 27

<sup>15</sup> On the seventh day they rose early, at the dawn of day, and marched around the city in the same manner seven times. It was *only* on that day that they marched around the city seven times. <sup>16</sup> And at the seventh time, when the priests had blown the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, "Shout, for the Lord has given you the city. <sup>17</sup> And the city and all that is within it shall be devoted to the Lord for destruction. Only Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall live, because she hid the messengers whom we sent. <sup>18</sup> But you, keep yourselves from the things devoted to destruction, lest when you have devoted them you take any of the devoted things and make the camp of Israel a thing for destruction and bring trouble upon it. <sup>19</sup> But all silver and gold, and every vessel of bronze and iron, are holy to the Lord; they shall go into the treasury of the Lord." <sup>20</sup> So the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted a great shout, and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they captured the city. <sup>21</sup> Then they devoted all in the city to destruction, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and donkeys, with the edge of the sword.

<sup>27</sup> So the Lord was with Joshua, and his fame was in all the land.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Is God a moral monster? All of Jericho was devoted to destruction—men and women, young and old, etc. The answer is obviously "No." However, a one-page double-sided study guide probably won't give you a complete answer. Neither will an 8-minute video if you scan the QR code. But, it's a start.

God's character was well defined when he sent his Son to die for you and me. Not all parts of the Bible are that easy to understand—but that truth shapes everything else.



### DISCUSSION

What has stood out the most from our study so far?  
How have you changed as a result of this study?

1. What actions and directions were unique to Day 7? (15-17)

2. What specific prohibition did Joshua give re: Jericho's material items? (18-19)

3. What resulted from this victory? (27)

4. Since the Israelites were never told what God would do in advance, what can we learn about their faith in Joshua and the Lord?

5. Looking back, what options did Jericho's people have re: Joshua and his God?

6. What possible consequences exist if you live sold out for Jesus? What about if you don't? (See also Romans 10:14)

Today's passage begins a war of purification. God takes sin seriously. If you have questions about the cost of sin, or what to do about it, talk to your coach today.

## STUDY NOTES

### THE RECKONING

In Week 2, we discussed the lesson 440 years in the making. God's fame had spread and stories declaring the power of Israel's Lord had flooded the Land. Jericho and the inhabitants of the Land had been given the opportunity to fear God, humble themselves, and turn to him, like we read of Rahab the prostitute. Instead, Jericho fortified the city and prepared for the coming siege. The reckoning was at hand.

The fighting men of Jericho likely stood on the walls awaiting their enemy. Dust clouds billowed from the marching army heading to their city. They had all heard the rumors—of Pharaoh in Egypt, the Amorite kings, the destruction of Sihon and Og (Joshua 2:10)—but they steadied their nerves as the multitude drew near.

The sound of blowing trumpets grew louder, but these were not the horns of battle. It was the sound of celebration. Not only that, the army did not lay siege to Jericho. Standing on the wall, the men of Jericho stood stunned as Israel spoke no words, shouted no orders, but marched a lap around the city, then went home.

The next day, the fighting men rallied once more to stand guard on the wall. To their astonishment, Israel again marched around the city with trumpets of jubilee and left. By day 6, it's likely the men of Jericho had no fear of the army that didn't fight. We can imagine the shouts and taunts they hurled at Israel as they marched their lap. Instead of steadying their nerves, they're passing the popcorn and watching the show.

## VICTORY REQUIRES OBEDIENCE

Despite the mockery, despite the strangeness of the orders, **on the seventh day** [Israel's army] **rose early, at the dawn of day, and marched around the city in the same manner seven times.** With each lap, the men of Jericho probably got more nervous at the unusual change— **it was only on that day that they marched around the city seven times.**

**At the seventh time, when the priests had blown the trumpets** [just as the Lord had commanded], **Joshua said to the people, "Shout, for the Lord has given you the city."**

The *Israelites* didn't know what the *Lord* would do to the walls, but as Joshua continued, he made very clear what they would do with the city. **"All that is within it shall be devoted to the Lord for destruction."**

The only exception to destruction was honoring the promise given to Rahab. **Only**

**Rahab the prostitute and all who are with her in her house shall live, because she hid the messengers.**

Joshua, understanding the greedy hearts of men, commanded them, **"But you, keep yourselves from the things devoted to destruction, lest when you have devoted them you take any of the devoted things and make the camp of Israel a thing for destruction and bring trouble upon it."** Another spoiler alert: this command foreshadows the "trouble" we'll study next Week.

Although the men were not allowed to take anything for themselves, the precious items in Jericho— **all silver and gold, and every vessel of bronze and iron**—belonged to the Lord as *holy*.

The moment came and Jericho's fighting men on the wall faced a torrent of sound from the trumpets and a multitude of shouting men. **As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted a great shout, and the wall fell down flat** [except for Rahab's section], **so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they captured the city.**

## OBEDIENCE WILL DRAW US TO GOD

We often think by submitting to authorities, we lose something—freedom, self-expression, opportunities. When God asks for obedience, we may lose those things, but it's only to give a much greater gift than we could achieve on our own.

Faithful obedience God requires trust. When we trust, God is faithful and our trust is rewarded. Then, it becomes easier to trust God and the cycle continues.

The opposite is also true, if I don't trust God, I tend to seek my own outcome. When I fail, I shake my fist at heaven saying, "God, why don't you fix this!" My lack of faithful obedience, and the negative result, pushes me away from God and toward greater self-reliance.

It's only through faithful obedience that we can draw close to God. The importance of this in Joshua's life cannot be overstated. After the victory, when Joshua's great faith and obedience was rewarded, the author concluded, **"So the Lord was with Joshua, and his fame was in all the land."**

It has been said, "A person is either a missionary or a mission field." To put it another way, a person is either on the wall awaiting destruction, or marching around awaiting victory. One position looks smart and one looks stupid. However, God turned the tables and showed that through obedience, even the strongest stone crumbles. Therefore, let us look like fools, marching as God orders, and trusting him with the results.

### POWER PLAY

In hockey, when a team takes a penalty, one player goes to the penalty box creating a “power play” for the other team. Roughly 20–25% of goals scored happen on a power play. One person’s transgression hinders the whole team. The remaining players fight to pick up the slack, but it’s often not enough.

The Israelites enjoyed a stunning victory at Jericho. Obeying the Lord’s instructions, on the seventh day they marched seven times, shouted, and the walls fell flat! Once the walls fell, the Israelites charged over the rubble, secured the most valuable items for the Lord, killed its inhabitants, and burned everything else. Every Israelite involved obeyed all instructions...except one man.

After Jericho, Israel marched up to take Ai. Spies reported only two or three thousand men should be plenty. What the fighting men of Israel didn’t know is that Ai had a power play. As we will see today, one of their own had a penalty against him and the whole team suffered a stiff loss.

#### JOSHUA 7:19–26

<sup>19</sup> Then Joshua said to Achan, “My son, give glory to the Lord God of Israel and give praise to him. And tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me.” <sup>20</sup> And Achan answered Joshua, “Truly I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and this is what I did: <sup>21</sup> when I saw among the spoil a beautiful cloak from Shinar, and 200 shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels, then I coveted them and took them. And see, they are hidden in the earth inside my tent, with the silver underneath.”

<sup>22</sup> So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and behold, it was hidden in his tent with the silver underneath. <sup>23</sup> And they took them out of the tent and brought them to Joshua and to all the people of Israel. And they laid them down before the Lord. <sup>24</sup> And Joshua and all Israel with him took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver and the cloak and the bar of gold, and his sons and daughters and his oxen and donkeys and sheep and his tent and all that he had. And they brought them up to the Valley of Achor. <sup>25</sup> And Joshua said, “Why did you bring trouble on us? The Lord brings trouble on you today.” And all Israel stoned him with stones. They burned them with fire and stoned them with stones.

<sup>26</sup> And they raised over him a great heap of stones that remains to this day. Then the Lord turned from his burning anger. Therefore, to this day the name of that place is called the Valley of Achor.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

On this side of Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection sin has been beaten. We can be free from sin. Not only that, our God fights for us, in us, and through us. Our spiritual battles cause us to forget the victory we have in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.



Listen to the song “Armies” on the left by KB to get hyped about the God who fights for us.

On the right, KB interviews Chris Tomlin who’s song “Whom Shall I Fear,” inspired this track.



### DISCUSSION

What is something you’ve learned about temptation as you have fought your spiritual battle?

1. What did Joshua say to Achan? How did Achan respond? (19-21)

2. What happened next? (22-24)

3. How was the matter concluded? (25-26)

4. What can we learn from Joshua’s...

- words and tone when disciplining Achan? (19)

- actions validating Achan’s confession? (22-24)

- final response re: Achan and his family? (25-26)

5. How can/do you help your team realize how their behavior, on and off the field, impacts the entire team?

Have you been impacted negatively by someone else’s sin? Sure, we all have to one degree or another. God’s job is justice, our job is forgiveness. Sound hard? Talk to your coach today.

ICEBREAKER

OBSERVATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

## STUDY NOTES

### HOME FREE

In week 3 of the 2020 season, the Seattle Seahawks' DK Metcalf beat Trevon Diggs of the Dallas Cowboys on a deep pass by about five yards. With less than 10 yards to the endzone after the catch, Metcalf held the ball one-handed and started to slow up for an easy jog-in goal.

One problem for Metcalf, however, was Diggs never quit on the play. Instantly, this clip showed up in the *"Never celebrate too early"* compilations. Diggs didn't let up and got the step he needed to punch the ball out of the back of the endzone before Metcalf strolled in. Instead of scoring, the Seahawks turned the ball over with a Cowboy's touchback. If Metcalf had not let up, if he had secured the ball like every coach ever told him to do, he would have easily scored. In perceived success lurks the greatest danger of failure.

Under Joshua's leadership, Israel had stacked success on success. God delivered them on dry land across an otherwise raging river. God gave Jericho into Israel's hands without even a fight. The worst part of Jericho was the marching for all the men who had been recently circumcised.

Then, as Israel set her sights on Ai, they figured it would be easy. Men died and Israel was beaten. Burdened, Joshua went to the Lord and discovered one of their own had started spiritually coasting.

### DISCIPLINE INVOLVES PERSONAL SIN

After Israel took a beating at Ai, *Joshua tore his clothes and fell to the earth on his face before the ark* (7:6). The Lord told Joshua that someone had taken loot for themselves from Jericho. The Lord instructed Joshua to separate the people out by tribes. Through casting lots they would discover first the offender's tribe, then clan, then household, and then the man himself. Soon, Joshua, brokenhearted, stood before Achan from the tribe of Judah and the clan of Zerah.

**Then Joshua said to Achan, "My son, give glory to the Lord God of Israel and give praise to him. And tell me now what you have done; do not hide it from me."** We can imagine Achan going through this process, knowing the whole selecting of tribe, clan, etc. would eventually get to him. He hoped it wouldn't, but it did.

Even though Achan's sin led to the death of 36 men, note Joshua's fatherly compassion. He called him "son," and first encouraged him to give God glory and praise. Essentially, Joshua said,

"You can lie to me, but you can't fool God. Honor God's wisdom, knowledge, and power and tell us the truth."

**Achan answered Joshua, "Truly I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and this is what I did: when I saw among the spoil a beautiful cloak from Shinar, and 200 shekels of silver, and a bar of gold weighing 50 shekels, then I coveted them and took them. And see, they are hidden in the earth inside my tent, with the silver underneath."** Clearly, this was wrong and Achan knew it. He wasn't ignorant of the command (that wouldn't have helped anyway), but he took the plunder.

Joshua sent men to gather the plunder **and they laid them down before the Lord. And Joshua said, "Why did you bring trouble on us? The Lord brings trouble on you today." And all Israel stoned him with stones. They burned them with fire and stoned them with stones.** Joshua not only destroyed the plunder, but Achan, his family, and everything he had. Finally, they set up a reminder of sin's consequences because, as we've said, reminders are important.

Why judge Achan's whole family? The text remains silent. However, the Law prohibited innocent family members from being punished for the sins of their relatives (Deuteronomy 24:16). Therefore, Achan's family must have somehow been guilty of assisting him in his sin, if only in keeping his secret.

### VICTORY REQUIRES DISCIPLINE

The judgment seems brutally harsh to our modern ears. It was swift and severe, but it was just. Sin, like cancer, spreads—it infects. God wanted to settle Israel into the Promised Land as a holy people. He could not let them conquer the Land while corrupting themselves.

Just because Israel had been successful so far, didn't mean it was time to loosen up in obedience. There is no such thing as home free. You cannot let off the gas. In this life, you are not safe, ever.

Additionally, not only does your sin affect you, it impacts others as well. In Achan's case, men died even though he thought, "I'm not hurting anybody." Sound familiar? This statement is all too often followed by, "I didn't mean to."

Bible scholar, Douglas Moo, said, "Christian maturity should not be measured by the infrequency of temptation, but by the infrequency of yielding to it." Perhaps, as you been fighting your spiritual battle that we've discussed in previous Weeks, you've been facing extra temptation. Don't give up!

If you've been experiencing victory, that's awesome. You don't accidentally defeat sin. Maintain your discipline and keep fighting!

### PLANS

Dwight D. Eisenhower, 34<sup>th</sup> President of the United States and former Supreme Allied Commander in World War 2, famously said, "In preparing for battle, I have always found that plans are useless, but planning is indispensable."

Plans change, they must adapt. If the old saying is true, "No plan survives first contact with the enemy," a leader cannot be rigid in their execution. This is as true in a game plan, as a battle plan.

Some people read James 4:14 and believe that planning is unspiritual. It reads, "*You do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.*" This view is wrong. Holding fast to our plans as if we control the universe is unspiritual. However, if our plans echo verse 15, "*If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that*" then we see Eisenhower's wisdom that planning is indispensable.

In today's study, we will see that a thoughtful plan *doesn't* reveal a lack of faith. In fact, it took an immense amount of faith to carry it out.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

"You're better than that!" In the 2006 movie *Rocky Balboa*, tells Rocky's comeback story. The premise sounds crazy, and it is, but it's worth watching. The clip in the QR code is worth watching too.

I imagine God saying similar things, not to Israel, but to us. The world ain't sunshine and rainbows because of sin. However, through Christ, we may get knocked down, but we don't have to stay down. The world blames everything for their problems but sin. Only Jesus offers the comeback.



### DISCUSSION

Describe a time when you made plans, but things didn't go quite as you expected.

1. What 3 things did Joshua do the next morning? (10)

2. After the soldiers attacked Joshua's Decoy Force, describe Ai's defense. (17)

3. What is the relationship between developing/ implementing a strategy vs. exercising faith?

4. Consider the spiritual battle that you face. What factors have you considered as you developed your strategy for your victory?

1<sup>st</sup> Who are your other soldiers around you?

2<sup>nd</sup> How can your coach grow or lead you?

3<sup>rd</sup> What Bible verses speak to your battle?

4<sup>th</sup> How can you seek God in your battle?

Struggling with your spiritual battle? Maybe you haven't even decided whether or not you want to take up the fight. If you need help, talk to your coach today.

### JOSHUA 8:10–17

<sup>10</sup> Joshua arose early in the morning and mustered the people and went up, he and the elders of Israel, before the people to Ai. <sup>11</sup> And all the fighting men who were with him went up and drew near before the city and encamped on the north side of Ai, with a ravine between them and Ai. <sup>12</sup> He took about 5,000 men and set them in ambush between Bethel and Ai, to the west of the city. <sup>13</sup> So they stationed the forces, the main encampment that was north of the city and its rear guard west of the city. But Joshua spent that night in the valley. <sup>14</sup> And as soon as the king of Ai saw this, he and all his people, the men of the city, hurried and went out early to the appointed place toward the Arabah to meet Israel in battle. But he did not know that there was an ambush against him behind the city. <sup>15</sup> And Joshua and all Israel pretended to be beaten before them and fled in the direction of the wilderness. <sup>16</sup> So all the people who were in the city were called together to pursue them, and as they pursued Joshua they were drawn away from the city. <sup>17</sup> Not a man was left in Ai or Bethel who did not go out after Israel. They left the city open and pursued Israel.

ICEBREAKER

OBSERVATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION



## STUDY NOTES THE COMEBACK

One of the most incredible sports comebacks ever occurred at a college track meet. In 2008, Heather Dorniden of the University of Minnesota competed in the Big Ten 600-meter championship. Favored to win, by the end of the second lap (indoors), she had secured the lead position. Then the unthinkable happened. After a competitor's toe brushed her heel, Dorniden fell and every runner passed her by.

Determined to give her very best, Dorniden rose to the challenge. With just 200 meters (one lap) to go, she readied herself to run as never before. Although about 20 meters behind the last place runner, Heather rallied herself for the toughest lap of her life. Over the next 30 seconds, she renewed her purpose and passed every runner in front of her and took first place. For the most inspirational 1.5-minute video, scan the QR code.



Israel got smashed in the mouth by Ai once. However, God had given them a command to take the Promised Land. Achan's sin had been purified, yet I'm sure some of Israel's fighting men had concerns. Joshua trusted God's Promise when he said, *"Do not fear and do not be dismayed. Take all the fighting men with you, and arise, go up to Ai. See, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, and his people, his city, and his land. And you shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king. Only its spoil and its livestock you shall take as plunder for yourselves. Lay an ambush against the city, behind it"* (8:1–2). Joshua laid out the plans to the men and it was time to move.

## VICTORY REQUIRES COMEBACKS

**Joshua arose early in the morning and mustered the people.** The Israelites hiked the 2,500 ft. climb as they **went up**. The famous quote, "Leaders lead," illustrates Joshua's position—**he and the elders of Israel** took point and went **before the people of Israel to Ai. All the fighting men who were with him.** They **went up and drew near before the city and encamped on the north side of Ai, with a ravine between them and Ai.**

Joshua planned what we'll call "The Strike Force" of **about 5,000 men and set them in ambush between Bethel and Ai, to the west of the city.** These 5,000 men were **stationed** unseen by the men of Ai. They were too busy focusing on **the main encampment that was north of the city.** Joshua led the main encampment, what we'll call

"The Decoy Force." Finally, in order to protect the main encampment, "The Decoy Force," Joshua established a **rear guard west of the city.**

With these three groups, the plan was set. **As soon as the king of Ai saw this, he and all his people, the men of the city, hurried and went out early to the appointed place toward the Arabah to meet Israel in battle.** Of course, the king **did not know that there was an ambush against him behind the city.**

Joshua dipped, dived, ducked, and dodged **and all Israel pretended to be beaten before them and fled in the direction of the wilderness.** The "head-fake" of the Decoy Force succeeded and **all the people who were in the city were called together to pursue them. Not a man was left in Ai or Bethel who did not go out after Israel. They left the city open and pursued Israel.**

## COMEBACKS OCCUR FOR THOSE WHO ARE READY

Joshua fought a *physical* war to take a *physical* land by slaying a *physical* enemy. Today, we fight a spiritual war against an unseen enemy to reclaim that which sin has corrupted. Our physical reality still matters, that's just not where the front-line of the war is today.

Perhaps you feel like you're already out of the fight because of the damage done by sin in your life. Maybe you've given up or given in—you don't even know why you're at this Bible study. Maybe you've done things you think the people sitting around you wouldn't believe. If that's you, it's time for a comeback.

How do you make a comeback? Like sports, you must ready yourself. Accurately assess the past, isolate the causes of the earlier defeat, and develop a winning strategy for the future. That means maximizing your strengths and minimizing your weaknesses.

Your strengths in the war are many. *First*, sitting in this study, you have soldiers around you who want to help you win. *Second*, you have a coach who can help lead you. *Third*, you have enormous power in God's Word in your hands. *Finally*, but probably most importantly, you have an offer for a relationship with the Creator of the Universe, purchased by the blood of Christ, and experienced through Holy Spirit in our lives (see Romans 5:1–5). If you don't have a relationship with God, today you can. If you do have a relationship with God, but you've been running from him, you can stop running and return to the Father who loves you (1 John 1:9).

We have an enemy in the war, but our God is greater. He's given us a battle plan, we just have to act on it. Are you ready?

### CAN'T FOOL ME

Nobody is so smart they can't get fooled. The QR code has 6-minutes worth of baseball clips with guys getting suckered. Although some people don't get fooled all the time, all people get fooled some of the time.



At its heart, sin is a lie—it deceives. If sin told the truth about its consequences, nobody would do it. Instead, sin says, “Live for today. The only thing that matters is what feels good right now. You will be satisfied, I promise.”

If this were true, why has antidepressant usage risen so much in the last 20 years? In the middle of the pandemic in 2020, anti-anxiety medication jumped 34%. If the Coronavirus did nothing else, it showed us just how fragile the things we trusted truly were, and people medicated those consequences. Sin is a liar and we've all been fooled.

Only by seeking God's wisdom can we overcome the foolishness to which we naturally turn. Israel had repeated lessons on seeking the Lord's wisdom, but even in today's passage, they forgot to check with him first. Because they didn't seek the Lord, they got tragically fooled.

#### JOSHUA 9:8–15

<sup>8</sup> They said to Joshua, “We are your servants.” And Joshua said to them, “Who are you? And where do you come from?” <sup>9</sup> They said to him, “From a very distant country your servants have come, because of the name of the Lord your God. For we have heard a report of him, and all that he did in Egypt, <sup>10</sup> and all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon the king of Heshbon, and to Og king of Bashan, who lived in Ashtaroath. <sup>11</sup> So our elders and all the inhabitants of our country said to us, ‘Take provisions in your hand for the journey and go to meet them and say to them, “We are your servants. Come now, make a covenant with us.”’”

<sup>12</sup> Here is our bread. It was still warm when we took it from our houses as our food for the journey on the day we set out to come to you, but now, behold, it is dry and crumbly. <sup>13</sup> These wineskins were new when we filled them, and behold, they have burst. And these garments and sandals of ours are worn out from the very long journey.” <sup>14</sup> So the men took some of their provisions, but did not ask counsel from the Lord. <sup>15</sup> And Joshua made peace with them and made a covenant with them, to let them live, and the leaders of the congregation swore to them.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

How can I know when God is telling me to do something? Joshua had access to God through his presence in the Tabernacle. God dwelled among the people. Obviously, none of us can go visit with God in the same way Joshua could.

Since we can't go visit God's presence, are we hopeless? No! Check out the QR code for more answers to the question, “How can I know when God is telling me to do something?”



### DISCUSSION

What's some great advice you've received?

1. What did they claim they had heard? (9-10)

2. What apparent evidence did they present? (12-13)

3. What did Joshua and the Israelites do and not do? (14)

4. Why might they have claimed to pretend they traveled so far? (9-13)

5. Why do you think Joshua and the Israelites responded as they did? (14)

6. What do you think are the keys in your life to avoid the deception of sin and live according to God?

ICEBREAKER

OBSERVATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

When struggling to make good choices, God provided community. Like we mentioned last Week, you have people in your corner. Talk to your coach today.



## STUDY NOTES ALL STAR

The oldest, most popular, and all-time best-selling basketball shoes are Converse All Stars. They were first produced in 1917 and were updated in the 1920's to the more familiar black and white variety. Nearly 60% of Americans have owned at least one pair.

Recently, Converse partnered with a designer to promote the new TURBODRK Chuck 70. The ad campaign had an Instagram post by Converse featuring two leather-clad masked figures in what appears as a pentagram shaped pose. The following quote from the designer, Rich Owens accompanied the post,

"I've been using this pentagram for a long time because obviously, it has adolescent occult associations. But I like geometric diagrams like that because, in a very primal way, they are a culture's grasp for control. And a way to organize thoughts and systems. And a pentagram, in this day and age with all of its associations... I like the fact that it refers to an alternative system. And that suggests openness and empathy. It suggests the pursuit of pleasure, this pursuit of sensation. But one of the main things that I think it suggests is empathy and a consideration of systems of living that might not be standard. So that leads us to be more accepting and tolerant of other systems, which I think is a good thing."

Words like "occult," "control," "pleasure," "sensation," etc. should raise a red flag for anyone passionately pursuing Jesus. Not everything in this paragraph is anti-Christian. We're big fans of openness, empathy, tolerance, and acceptance—however, a biblically-minded Christian will define those terms very differently.

The deception is very subtle. In fact, some people may say, "This doesn't matter, it's just a shoe." Cultural values shape our faith more than we often consider. So often, we are steeped in lies from living in a sinful world that we don't even have the perspective needed to know what we're doing is wrong. Something can sound so right and yet be completely wrong—even a shoe ad.

Today's story is an example of this. Israel had a limited perspective. They did something that sounded right, yet had devastating generational consequences.

## VICTORY REQUIRES HUMILITY

After Israel's victories at Jericho and Ai, inhabitants of the Land named the "Gibeonites" (because they were from Gibeon), planned to trick Israel. They put on costumes of worn-out clothes and traveling gear, and came to speak with Joshua about a peace treaty.

Joshua cleverly asked how he might know they're not the Land's inhabitants. They responded, ***"From a very distant country your servants have come, because of the name of the Lord your God. For we have heard a report of him, and all that he did in Egypt, and all that he did to the two kings of the Amorites..."***

Notice, however, that he referred to "your God." Clearly, they weren't ready to convert as Rahab had done even though they feared destruction by Israel's God.

Likewise, he slyly never mentioned the victories at Jericho or Ai. Instead, he appeared to only know what happened years ago. Had the con man acknowledged Joshua's two most recent victories inside the Land, he may have blown his cover.

As proof that they traveled far, the men showed their old worn-out provisions. Inspecting the gear, ***the men took some of their provisions, but did not ask counsel from the Lord. And Joshua made peace with them and made a covenant with them, to let them live, and the leaders of the congregation swore to them.***

## HUMILITY REDUCES FOOLISHNESS

Subtle, foolish pride led to over-confidence, causing them to trust their own judgment based on what they physically experienced (sight and taste) and felt (sympathy and compassion) rather than seeking an answer from God. That pride made them vulnerable. In so many words they declared, "Who needs God?"

Most of us know right from wrong, black and white. However, life is full of gray choices. In these moments we need practical help to evaluate our decisions. Here are a few suggestions: First, "Is there a clear-cut Bible command?" Things like lying, sexual immorality, drunkenness are clearly prohibited in the Bible.

Second, "Will this hurt my body or upset the Holy Spirit living within me?" Smoking and vaping isn't really in the Bible. However, we know it damages the body. Therefore, it's not something a person ought to do. Additionally, the addiction caused by repeated use turns into a life-long consequence for a short-term decision.

Finally, "Will this hurt my witness or defame God's name?" As a silly example, if you have the little fish symbol on your car, don't drive like an idiot. If believers are in the business of making disciples, then we don't want to damage our mission by conduct or language.

It's sometimes hard to know what to do. In all things, we must humble ourselves, seek the Lord, and determine how he would have us live.

### THE BIG GUY

It doesn't matter which team you're rooting for, when a "big guy" makes an unexpected play, we all celebrate. The most unforgettable "big guy" moment, for me, was the 2010 NFC Championship Game when Packers defensive lineman B.J. Raji intercepted a pass, ran it into the endzone, and danced. That dance put me, and everyone else watching, on the floor laughing. The next day, that dance was everywhere—even a State Farm commercial.

In Joshua 10, the *real* Big Guy showed up in unexpected ways as well. Although God has used and will use *his* people in *his* army to fight *his* battles, today he fights for *them* as well.

It takes a Big God to do big things. However, God often uses people to accomplish those big things. we must trust and obey God to work through us. God doesn't need people to do anything. However, he allows people to see him at work by working through us. The Big Guy did big things through Joshua and we can trust him for big things too!



### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Do you believe the Lord will fight for you? Although the Lord may fight for us in different ways than he did in the time of Joshua, it doesn't mean the effects are any less significant. Our battle is not against flesh and blood, we aren't reclaiming a Promised Land. Our fight is against sin and to see sinners saved. However, apart from the ultimate battle, life is hard.

Check out the QR code for some needed encouragement (especially the verses) that the Lord fights for us!



### DISCUSSION

What is your favorite "big guy" moment in sports?

1. What did the King of Jerusalem fear regarding Israel? (1-2)

2. How did he respond? (3-4)

3. On what basis did God tell Joshua not to fear? (8)

4. What do Joshua's actions and God's promise reveal about...

-Joshua's faith? (7)

-God's heart? (8)

5. What evidence is there that you trust God for big things? (Ask yourself these questions)

-If God answered "yes" to all of your prayers over the last week what are some things that would change?

-What is something big you're trusting God to do right now?

Sometimes we have victory in battle. Sometimes we take some licks. No matter what your facing, don't go it alone. Talk to your coach today.

ICEBREAKER

OBSERVATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

### JOSHUA 10:1-4, 7-8

<sup>1</sup> As soon as Adoni-zedek, king of Jerusalem, heard how Joshua had captured Ai and had devoted it to destruction, doing to Ai and its king as he had done to Jericho and its king, and how the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel and were among them, <sup>2</sup> he feared greatly, because Gibeon was a great city, like one of the royal cities, and because it was greater than Ai, and all its men were warriors.

<sup>3</sup> So Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem sent to Hoham king of Hebron, to Piram king of Jarmuth, to Japhia king of Lachish, and to Debir king of Eglon, saying, <sup>4</sup> "Come up to me and help me, and let us strike Gibeon. For it has made peace with Joshua and with the people of Israel."

<sup>7</sup> So Joshua went up from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valor. <sup>8</sup> And the Lord said to Joshua, "Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands. Not a man of them shall stand before you."

## STUDY NOTES

### CHANGE THE WORLD

William Wilberforce became a Christian in 1785. Two years later, his faith inspired a lifelong fight against slavery, first in England, then in the United States, and later throughout the world. Slavery had always existed and appeared in almost every culture from antiquity to present. Many considered Wilberforce's vision lunacy. He wanted to do something that had simply never been done—abolish the slave trade.

It's hard to overstate the uphill battle Wilberforce faced. Entire economic systems stood on the shoulders of the slave trade. To eradicate slavery meant emptying the pockets of many wealthy and powerful people—not to mention putting many working people out of a job. It was an industry unto itself. Even before we consider ol' fashioned racism and prejudice, there were practical issues related to ending slavery.

Wilberforce didn't care. Slavery was pure evil. He trusted a Big God to do the impossible. Thankfully, God used Wilberforce to end slavery in England and much of the world would follow his example.

### VICTORY REQUIRES VISION

The fame (or infamy depending on who you asked) of Joshua and Israel spread throughout the Land. ***As soon as Adoni-zedek, king of Jerusalem, heard how Joshua had captured Ai and had devoted it to destruction, doing to Ai and its king as he had done to Jericho and its king, and how the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel and were among them, he feared greatly, because Gibeon was a great city, like one of the royal cities, and because it was greater than Ai, and all its men were warriors.***

Although the Gibeonites had snookered Israel, Adoni-zedek recognized the problem. Mighty Gibeon laid down arms and chose to make peace. If Gibeon couldn't stand their ground, who could?

***So Adoni-zedek king of Jerusalem sent to Hoham king of Hebron, to Piram king of Jarmuth, to Japhia king of Lachish, and to Debir king of Eglon, saying, "Come up to me and help me, and let us strike Gibeon. For it has made peace with Joshua and with the people of Israel."***

Adoni-zedek joined with five other kings in a coalition force. This coalition understood they weren't stronger than Jericho, than Ai, or Gibeon on their own. However, together, maybe they had a shot.

Because of their treaty, the men of Gibeon sent word to Joshua to come protect them. ***So Joshua went up from Gilgal, he and all the***

***people of war with him, and all the mighty men of valor. And the Lord said to Joshua, "Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands. Not a man of them shall stand before you."***

Notice God's words. He used a past tense verb for a future event. He said, "I have given..." Although God had not yet delivered Israel's enemies over, his promise was so sure, he spoke as though it already happened. This promise probably reminded Joshua of God's promise through Moses spoken not that long ago, recorded in Deuteronomy 20:4, ***"For the Lord your God is he who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies, to give you the victory."***

Boy howdy! Joshua 10 records two very miraculous events. As Israel and the Gibeonites faced the coalition force, God threw the army of the 5 kings into panic. Israel struck them and they fled. As they fled, God sent giant hailstones that killed more of the coalition force than Israel's army. Not only that, Joshua prayed and God answered his prayer by keeping the Sun up for a whole day so that the fight may not end because of nightfall. Verse 14 records that, ***"There has been no day like it before or since, when the Lord heeded the voice of a man, for the Lord fought for Israel."***

### VISION TRUSTS A BIG GOD

Do you believe God will fight for you? Do you believe that we can trust him to do impossible things? Although God probably won't smash our enemies or extend daylight hours for us, he did it for them. He did it because his people needed him and they prayed.

On this side of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, God has already accomplished so much. However, we live in a strange time that many people call the "already/not yet." Sin has *already* been defeated by Christ on the cross. However, sin has *not yet* been eradicated because Christ has not returned in judgment. When Christ comes back, people will be judged and any person that does not have a relationship with Jesus will spend an eternity apart from God in Hell.

We mentioned earlier in this study that God promised Abraham the land that Israel is now fighting for in *Joshua*. Why? Because ***"the iniquity [sin] of the Amorites is not yet complete"*** (Genesis 15:16). The same thing is true now. The Promised Son will return just as assuredly as Israel took the Promised Land. However, we might guess that the sin of those who haven't trusted Christ is not yet complete.

Time is quickly running out for us to change the world. When Jesus returns your friends and family that don't know him face severe consequences. God is Big. He will fight with us and for us. Let's change the world.

### THE GREAT HORDE

Immediately following the events we studied last Week, another coalition force rose to fight Israel. Last Week, 5 kings from the south partnered to fight Israel. This Week, several more kings from the north banded together to end Israel's march across the Promised Land—or so they thought.

Joshua faced the biggest military threat in his entire life, by far. Both their size and military equipment far exceeded any foe previously defeated. Just how much military power are we talking about? Josephus, a 1<sup>st</sup> century Jewish historian, speculated this northern confederacy included 300,000 infantry soldiers, 10,000 cavalry troops, and 20,000 chariots.

Not only did the enemy have major advantages in men and fighting technology, but they would also be fighting on their home turf. They knew every ravine, cave, and vantage point, not to mention the very short supply line for food, weapons and reinforcements, never more than a few miles away.

Instead of saying, "Woe is me...not this again," Joshua sought the Lord, trusted in his promises, and went to fight.

#### JOSHUA 11:6–9, 23

<sup>6</sup>And the Lord said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid of them, for tomorrow at this time I will give over all of them, slain, to Israel. You shall hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire." <sup>7</sup>So Joshua and all his warriors came suddenly against them by the waters of Merom and fell upon them. <sup>8</sup>And the Lord gave them into the hand of Israel, who struck them and chased them as far as Great Sidon and Misrephoth-maim, and eastward as far as the Valley of Mizpeh. And they struck them until he left none remaining. <sup>9</sup>And Joshua did to them just as the Lord said to him: he hamstrung their horses and burned their chariots with fire.

<sup>23</sup>So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the Lord had spoken to Moses. And Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal allotments. And the land had rest from war.

#### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

"Faith is the supreme effort of your life—throwing yourself with abandon and total confidence upon God." Oswald Chambers wrote one of the most famous Christian devotionals of all time with *My Utmost For His Highest*. The QR code links to a devotion called *The Faith to Persevere*. Chambers eloquently hits on a theme we've repeated in this study—that the reward of our faith is the strengthening of our faith. God stretches our faith that we might have greater faith.



### DISCUSSION

Describe a time when you faced a daunting opponent.

1. What did the Lord say to Joshua? (6)
2. What happened next? (7-9)
3. Summarize the results of Joshua's entire conquest. (23)

4. What attributes has Joshua exhibited as God's leader and how are they manifested in this last major battle?

5. Give a report of your spiritual battle(s) that you've been fighting this semester. How can this group encourage you as you head into a break?

Maybe you're tired of persevering. Maybe you haven't seen any fruit from your faithfulness. Don't give up. If you need some encouragement, talk to your coach today.

ICEBREAKER

OBSERVATION

INTERPRETATION

APPLICATION

## STUDY NOTES

### GRIT

What if I told you that success wasn't primarily based on IQ, your family background, wealth, physical health, or attractiveness? In 2013, Angela Lee Duckworth researched the question, "What causes success?" She examined numerous fields including sales, income production, and education. Surprisingly, the best single predictor of achievement wasn't what we might think. It was grit—"passion and perseverance for very long-term goals." Those with grit live a marathon, not a sprint.

Duckworth's study showed grit best predicted someone's likeliness to graduate high school, superseding family income, SAT scores, even talent. Interestingly, she found grit is often inversely related to talent. That means talented people didn't have to try as hard to succeed and their lack of effort led to their failure. However, once less-talented students realize that failure—including their own—is not a permanent condition, they are much more likely to develop grit and persevere toward achievement. (To watch her 6-minute Ted Talk, scan the QR code).



Last Week, Joshua won a major victory against the kings to the south. Joshua credited his victories to God. In turn, the Lord used a person with grit to lead his people. This week, as Israel faced its greatest challenge yet, their victory would require faith and grit.

### VICTORY REQUIRES GRIT

We might imagine the sinking feeling Joshua had standing, looking at the massive army set against him. *Their troops, a great horde, in number like the sand that is on the seashore (11:4).* Yet, ***the Lord said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid of them, for tomorrow at this time I will give over all of them, slain, to Israel. You shall hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire."***

Imagine how hard that promise might have been to believe if this were Joshua's first battle. However, Joshua had witnessed God work several times before. This was not his first test of victory or annihilation. Because God had been faithful, Joshua trusted that God would continue to deliver on his promises.

***Joshua took God at his word and all his warriors came suddenly against them by the waters of Merom and fell upon them. And the Lord gave them into the hand of Israel, who struck them and chased them. And they struck them until he left none remaining. And Joshua did to them just as the Lord said to him.***

Think about all the potential setbacks Israel could have faced since Joshua took charge. First, God's GPS busted when he told them to cross a raging, 150-foot-deep river. God worked it out. The entire male population had to get circumcised then they were asked to go walk around Jericho—if a coach suggested that minor, but sensitive, operation a couple weeks before two-a-days, the team would revolt! Israel was defeated at Ai and came back to win it. God delivered Israel himself from the southern coalition. Now, God turned every advantage on its head and Israel prevailed again.

Finally, after seven years of fighting, ***Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the Lord had spoken to Moses. And Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal allotments. And the land had rest from war.***

### GRIT PASSIONATELY PERSEVERES

Finally, after 7 years of fighting, Joshua declared that the land had rest from war. This statement doesn't imply an end to *all* fighting. Indeed, Joshua himself announced the first of several such opportunities in just a few chapters. In fact, some fighting will continue long after Joshua's death. However, those minor skirmishes were fought by individuals or their clans. The work of the united army of Israel was over.

They had done it. They won—despite the numerous "Well, that's impossible" situations they encountered. At any point, it would have been so easy to quit.

Grit takes hard work and perseverance. Especially when you're not winning. Whether you feel like you're making progress or not, you may sometimes wonder if it's worth continuing. We all have those thoughts at one time or another. When those times come, consider this word to the Hebrews, *"You have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised"* (Hebrews 10:37).

Grit isn't glamorous. Grit requires a vision of what *could be* and *should be*. If the road were easy, it wouldn't take grit to get there. Grit is only required when the road is hard and everyone thinks you're a fool for continuing. However, when you have a vision of a better reality and how to make it so, the price tag is courage, fortitude, passion and perseverance—grit.

Everyone wants a championship, but few have what it takes to get there. The same is true spiritually. Everyone wants an easy faith, where we have Jesus without any demands on my life—life without life-change. Few understand Jesus' words when he said, *"If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me"* (Matthew 16:24). Now, *that* takes grit!

### FINISH WELL

Can you imagine working your entire life to get to the Olympics just to trip over another runner's feet during your race? How might you respond? Lashing out in anger, shouting obscenities, open weeping, maybe all the above! That happened to Isaiah Jewett and Nijel Amos in their 800m race.

Scan the QR code to see their response. As they get up, you can see initial disappointment in their body language. Then, clapping hands they help each other to their feet to finish the race at a jog.



So much of what happened embodies the Olympic spirit. Not only did they help one another rise up, they didn't quit. This is not a fairy tale, come from behind, story. They lost, but they finished. However, just by finishing they have a chance to move on to the next round. As the commentator said, "If they want to petition for any spot in the final...they have to finish."

If you study the Bible cover to cover, only 30% of all leaders finished well. 70% fell short of God's plan for their lives. As we'll see in today's study, finishing well is hard.

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Only 30% of all the leaders in the Bible finished well. Really? The QR code unpacks that idea with an article that lists several ways people finished, why many didn't finish well, and most importantly how we can learn to succeed from their mistakes.

Although this article was written to pastors, it applies to everyone. If you want to finish well, we must battle sin and follow Christ. He has already won the victory! God wants you to finish well, and he's made it possible.



### DISCUSSION

Joshua was a great leader. What appreciation or encouragement can you give your coach for leading this study?

1. What did Joshua warn the people? (19-20)
2. How did the people respond? (21)
3. How did Joshua answer them? (22-23)
4. How did the people respond to Joshua's challenge? (24)

ICEBREAKER

OBSERVATION

5. How did the distraction of foreign gods (20, 23) turn the hearts of the people away from the Lord?

INTERPRETATION

6. How has this study challenged you to fight your battles, to put away distractions, and trust the Lord?

APPLICATION

"Leave it all on the field." We hear that all the time. As it relates to this study, don't leave anything unsaid. If you made a decision or have a struggle, talk to your coach today.

### JOSHUA 13:1

Now Joshua was old and advanced in years, and the Lord said to him, "You are old and advanced in years, and there remains yet very much land to possess."

### JOSHUA 24:19-24

<sup>19</sup> But Joshua said to the people, "You are not able to serve the Lord, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. <sup>20</sup> If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm and consume you, after having done you good." <sup>21</sup> And the people said to Joshua, "No, but we will serve the Lord." <sup>22</sup> Then Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord, to serve him." And they said, "We are witnesses." <sup>23</sup> He said, "Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your heart to the Lord, the God of Israel." <sup>24</sup> And the people said to Joshua, "The Lord our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey."

## STUDY NOTES

### “I COULD HAVE GOT MORE”

During the Nazi’s ruthless execution of over six million Jews in WW2, one wealthy war profiteer-turned-industrialist, Oskar Schindler, eventually made it his life’s mission to save Jews from Hitler’s Holocaust. His story became popularly known through Steven Spielberg’s powerful 1993 film, *Schindler’s List*, starring Liam Neeson in the title role. Take a moment and watch this 6-minute clip.



This scene, one of the most powerful ever captured on film, illustrates the deep, heartfelt agony of regret. When it occurs to us that this is *not* just a movie, but truly happened, we feel Schindler’s grief. *“The car, 10 people. This pin, 2 people, at least 1...one more person. A person who’s dead.”*

In the end, Schindler’s values changed. Schindler started the war profiting off the property stolen from the Jews—he was just out to make money. The pin he later regretted, started as a badge of honor. His affiliation with the Nazi’s allowed him to make great wealth. Eventually, however, he discovered that the Jewish population weren’t a means for wealth, they were a people needing saving. He had the means and opportunity to save—and, in the end, he melted in agony at the fact he wasted money instead of investing it in saving lives.

Like Schindler leaving his factory, one day we will leave this earth. When we stand before Jesus, will we regret every missed opportunity, or will we rest knowing that we invested everything we could into saving lives for eternity?

### VICTORY REQUIRES PURPOSE

Although Last Week’s passage ended on a high note that the Land could rest from war, we discussed how this statement didn’t mean the fight was over completely. The next chapter states ***“Now Joshua was old and advanced in years, and the Lord said to him, ‘You are old and advanced in years, and there remains yet very much land to possess.’”***

The apparent contradiction between Joshua 11:23 and 13:1 can easily be explained. Joshua and his army took control of the whole land by destroying the key cities with their kings and people. However, Israel didn’t take every little city or slay every citizen or ruler. They did enough to break the power of the enemy and establish control over the land.

Once accomplished, the land enjoyed rest. Following the events studied so far, starting in chapter 13, Joshua assigned each tribe

its inheritance. However, within each inheritance, the tribes had to gain mastery over the non-Israeli inhabitants still remaining in it. Even after the death of Joshua and his officers, additional land still needed to be conquered.

The problem was that instead of eradicating the enemies of God, the people settled in and tolerated them. God had warned them if they didn’t remove the inhabitants, bad things would happen—and they did.

Eventually, at the end of Joshua’s life he rebukes the nation that had turned from God. In chapter 24, verse 15 Joshua frustratedly said, *“Choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”* Although we see part of this verse on signs above doorways, it’s not a friendly greeting. It’s a sharp rebuke against those who’s hearts had strayed.

After Joshua’s challenge, the people made a strong re-commitment to the Lord. ***The people said to Joshua, “No, but we will serve the Lord.” Then Joshua said to the people, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord, to serve him.” And they said, “We are witnesses.”***

Unfortunately, it didn’t take long for the commitment to waiver. The book of Judges records Joshua’s death and makes the tragic statement, *“And all that generation also were gathered to their fathers. And there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel”* (2:10).

### PURPOSE MUST ENDURE

A former professor once said, “If the mission of your life can be accomplished in a single lifetime, you’re aiming too small.” In the case of Israel after Joshua, they failed so completely that the next generation didn’t even know the Lord. Let our aim be a work that is so great it lasts for generations after we die.

Our hope in this study is that you walk away understanding several things. *First*, you will fight spiritual battles your whole life. You can never stop fighting. *Second*, life is a series of battles some you will win and some you will lose—how you respond in either situation matters a lot. *Third*, don’t run from the battles, trust the Lord to hit them head on. The *Art of War* says, “Appear at points which the enemy must hasten to defend; march swiftly to places where you are not expected.” In other words, don’t wait to be attacked, hurry the attack as you see opportunity.

*Finally*, start the fight *now*. You’re young, so what? Old people don’t change the world—revival can start with you right now.