

Be Strong and Very Courageous

A study of the Book and Life of Joshua

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These lessons were designed for you to use in the way that best fits your own schedule and preferences. Whether you plan a regular and predictable hour each week as your study time or you prefer to have shorter and more spontaneous minutes to do the lesson is entirely up to you. The important goal is that week by week you find time to focus and concentrate on God's Word and your relationship with The One Who loves you and longs for you to spend time with Him through the study of the Bible. If at all possible, find a quiet and uninterrupted time and place to meet with JESUS.

STUDY SUGGESTIONS for this series:

PREPARING YOURSELF - As you begin your study time, it is always wise to quiet your heart and mind – to be still. Put aside the details and distractions of your life, so that you can begin to focus on the God who loves you. This is an important time for you to come in to the presence of the Lord God and to invite Him to open you mind, soften your heart, and teach you the truths that He wants you to learn.

INFORMATION – Read the Scripture passage carefully. Use 2 or 3 different translations if possible.

OBSERVATION – What are the important, interesting, unusual facets to this story? What details are significant to notice and to keep in mind? Are there questions or ideas that you might want to consider more carefully?

INVESTIGATION – These questions are designed to help you ponder and meditate on the meaning and implications of the events in the life of Joshua and the Israelites. What was God accomplishing? Because of the response of the people or Joshua, what happened? What are the applications for us today? You may want to use all of the questions or only some of them. They are simply a tool to assist you in your consideration of the passages.

INVITATION - Take time to listen to the still small voice of Jesus, the One who knows you completely, loves you unconditionally, and Who rejoices when you choose to spend time in His presence. Listen for the truth that He wants to plant deep in your heart and mind so you can take the next step in trusting God. His promises will give you the courage and strength that you need – every day and in every situation – just as they did for Joshua.

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Lesson 1

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THE COURAGE TO GET READY

A promise had been made to Abraham. God had told him, "To your descendants I will give this land." Though it had often been repeated to each generation, decades had passed since the promise had been given. Now after being in bondage for 400 years in Egypt and then wandering around the wilderness for almost 40 years under the leadership of Moses, the children of Israel are on the verge of crossing the River Jordan and entering this Promised Land. What do you think this would have felt like? Would you have been ready or hesitant to follow Joshua's leadership? Would you have been worried about the enemies that you would be facing or would you have accepted the word that Joshua gave to you from the Lord? What gave Joshua and the people the courage to get ready?

INFORMATION - Read Joshua 1 - Try to read it several times - silently, out loud.

Read it in a variety of translations if possible.

OBSERVATION -

1. What did the Lord have to say to Joshua? What did He emphasize?
2. How did Joshua respond? To whom did he give directions?
3. How did the people react?

INVESTIGATION ("look into, search")

1. Changing leadership is very often a difficult and unpredictable time. With the change from Moses to Joshua it seems to be a smooth and productive period. Why do you think that this is or is not true?
2. What are the promises that the Lord gives to Joshua? What impresses you about them? Have you heard these promises any where else in Scripture?
3. What do you admire about Joshua as he receives these instructions from the Lord?

What are some of your observations about these instructions? Why would these be the important things to remember?

4. What kind of leadership do the people want from Joshua? Why do you think they are so willing to "obey" or follow Joshua?

INVITATION -

1. Based on God's promises, the Israelites were commanded to "be strong and courageous". Read II Peter 1: 3 – 4. What are the promises that He is asking you to believe today?
2. Is God inviting you to step out in faith, to move forward into a new territory, which will require that you begin to trust Him in new and exciting but scary ways, knowing that He will provide for you and meet every need? Talk with Jesus about your concerns and your willingness to enter your new "promised land".

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Lesson 2

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THE COURAGE TO FACE DANGER

In the Book of Numbers (Chap. 13 & Deut. 1: 19 - 33) we find the story about the 12 spies that the Israelites asked Moses to send out to explore the land of Canaan. Because 10 of them lacked courage and confidence in the Lord, they did not go in to conquer the land. Only Joshua and Caleb were committed to do what God had instructed them to do. Now it is Joshua's turn to send the spies and it will be a very different story. For this generation there is no question about courage and obedience because they have heard the promise of Jehovah and they are ready to go. How do you think the experience of the spies will influence their confidence this time?

INFORMATION - Read Joshua 2 – You will want to read this part of the story several times.

Look at it from the point of view of the spies, the king, the people of Jericho, Rahab and Rahab's family.

OBSERVATION -

1. What did you learn about the woman named Rahab? Who is she and what is she like?
2. What does this chapter tell you about the king of Jericho and the people there?
3. The 2 spies had life or death decisions to make as they entered the city. What were some of these decisions and how did they make them?

INVESTIGATION (“look into, search”)

1. How did these 2 secret spies show strength and courage in the face of great danger?
2. What does Rahab understand about the one, true God? Think about her actions & her words. The New Testament has some things to say about Rahab. How is she remembered?
Hebrews 11: 31
James 2: 21 - 26
Matthew 1: 5
3. Rahab did tell a lie to the king's messengers. How do you explain this?
4. A scarlet cord - It reminds us of the way in which God protected His people from the death angel in Egypt - Exodus 12: 1 -13.

What else does it make you think about in the New Testament? - Hebrews 9: 22, John 6: 32 - 59
5. Think about the report that the spies brought back to Joshua - verses 23 & 24.
What do you notice about this report and what effect do you think it had on Joshua and the people?

INVITATION -

1. God desires to en-COURAGE you today. (Literally - “Put heart into”). What would change in your life if you were to really believe that He would enable you to do what He is asking you to do?
2. Is the Lord be inviting you to step out in faith, to do something that for you feels risky and out of your comfort zone? Something that will help someone else? Ask Him to show you what it is and then “open your door”!

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Lesson 3

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THE COURAGE TO MAKE THE MOVE

The people of Israel left the "Acacia Grove", Shittim, and came to the Jordan River. It was a three day wait before they saw the ark of the Lord move toward the flooded river bank. They had at least 3 things which reassured them. The first was "if God can make a path through the Red Sea for our ancestors, He can do it for us!" The second was that the ark was the dwelling place of God's glory and His Law, and that ark was going to lead them across. Finally, the Lord had spoken to their leader, Joshua, and made a promise to him. So the people did what God said to do! They crossed the Jordan into the land which God had given to them and the fact that it was full of enemies, battles, and challenges did not stop them.

INFORMATION - Read Joshua 3: 1 to 5: 12 - It's a great story - the action begins!

Try to visualize it as you read.

Can you picture the camp site, the river, the miracle of the dry ground, and much more.

OBSERVATION -

1. Make a simple outline of the events that occurred in these chapters.
2. The Lord directed Joshua to do certain things. What are they?
 - a. 3: 7 - 13
 - b. 4: 1 - 3
 - c. 4: 16
 - d. 5: 2
 - e. 5: 9 - 12

INVESTIGATION ("look into, search")

1. What are your observations about why and how Joshua followed the Lord's instructions?
2. If crossing the Red Sea symbolizes for us, Christ's death and our forgiveness and redemption from bondage and slavery to sin, what do you believe the crossing of the Jordan might picture?
3. Can you find ways that Joshua instilled commitment to and confidence in the Lord when He spoke with the people?
4. Why do you think that the men needed to be circumcised at this time?
(Genesis 17, Exodus 12: 43 - 48)
5. Why would celebrating the Passover have been important?

INVITATION -

It's a big decision for every generation – actually for every individual person. Do you want to live life focused on the size of your enemies, the unknown future, and hold on to the past or do you want to let go of the controls of your life and respond to His invitation to let His Spirit guide you, giving you the strength and courage that you will need for the adventures that He has planned for you – Jeremiah 29: 11. Are you ready to accept His invitation to move ahead without delay? Why not RSVP right now and get going?

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THE COURAGE TO OBEY

Can you imagine what it would have been like that day as the people looked at the walled city of Jericho? The anticipation and excitement must have been very high. The men had been circumcised. The Passover had been celebrated. They finally had something besides manna for breakfast. Then Joshua gave them their "plan of attack". Jericho was a walled city about a half a mile in circumference and probably the strongest "enemy" that they would have to face. Isn't it just like the Lord God to come up with a totally creative way to accomplish His will? In the process He used His people and taught them about Himself, obedience, trust and victory.

INFORMATION - Read Joshua 5: 13 to 6: 27 -

Notice the individuals and groups of people who are included in this favorite Bible story.
Re-read the story with one or some of them in mind.

OBSERVATION -

1. The experience that Joshua has (5: 13 - 6: 5) is similar to one that Moses had in Exodus 3: 1-12. Who do you think this "commander of the army of the Lord is"?
2. Make a list of the participants in the procession as they were instructed to march around the city.
3. What did you learn about Rahab and her family in this chapter?
1. The curse pronounced in 6: 26 was fulfilled many centuries later - I Kings 16: 34. Hiel either offered his 2 sons as a foundation sacrifice (an ancient custom) or they died in some mishap.

INVESTIGATION ("look into, search")

1. What is the closest experience you have ever had to Joshua's encounter with "the commander"? Have you ever been in a place where you felt God's presence in a dramatic way or you sensed that you were experiencing a "holy or sacred moment"? What effect did this have on you?
2. What do you think the significance of the "ark of the Lord" being in this military attack would be for the people?
3. Why do you think the Lord ordered total destruction of the city? Deuteronomy 18: 9 - 14
4. After this dramatic experience, what do you think the Israelites were thinking, feeling and talking about?

INVITATION -

Do you want to even hear the invitation to obey? Is there a "walled city" in your life? An addiction or an idol, an old resentment or conflict, some habits or fears, failures or regrets, that hold you back from experiencing all that God has planned for you? Why not identify it? "March around it" in repentance or confession (I John 1: 8 - 9) and then receive the victory that God offers you with joy and thanksgiving? It's an open invitation for you!

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THE COURAGE TO BE HONEST

Why would God allow the whole nation to fail when only one man had sinned? In the nation of Israel one person's failure reflected on the whole family's name. In fact, it was a black mark on the whole tribe. What do you think would happen if this were a bigger consideration in our culture? When Joshua fell down before the Lord in sorrow and mourning his greatest concern was the reputation of God's "own great name". God had not turned His back on the Israelites. There was sin, really a sinner, that needed to be removed. It is hard to imagine what the process of identifying the problem would have been like, but fortunately when it came down to Achan, he did tell the truth. This time, the truth did not prevent the consequences from happening to him personally, but for the Israelites it meant future success.

INFORMATION - Read Joshua 7 and 8

Read these 2 chapters several times and then try to tell this story in your own words.

OBSERVATION -

1. What are the major events in these 2 chapters?
2. What did Achan do that was so bad?
3. The instructions for these battles are so different from our ethics today, aren't they? It is hard for us to understand the destruction. Try to focus on the ways in which the Israelites followed the instructions which the Lord gave to Joshua. What do you notice?
4. Remember Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim from the Book of Deuteronomy, chapters 27 - 30? At that time Moses reviewed with the Israelites what the results of disobedience and obedience would be. Why do you think Joshua was moved to read this to the people at this time?

INVESTIGATION ("look into, search")

1. Why do you think Achan did what he did? How did this affect his family? the nation? Why do you think there were such severe consequences?
2. It would have been quite confusing to lose this battle against Ai right after the victory at Jericho, wouldn't it? What do you think the people were thinking and saying?
2. After the victory at Ai, Joshua took some time to turn the attention of the Israelites to the Book of the Law, which Moses had written. What does this suggest to you?

INVITATION -

1. Sometimes it isn't easy to be truthful, to be honest. It's so easy to rationalize our choices and to find justification for our decisions, even when we know that they are not wise. What do you think that the Lord might be inviting you to admit or to confess? Who needs to know the truth?
2. The people of Israel often built an altar, a symbol that would remind them and future generations of the victory or blessing that God had given to them. What do you do to visually record your story of God's faithfulness to you so that you and others will find courage and strength for the next challenge?

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THE COURAGE TO BELIEVE

God's judgment on the Canaanites has caused many people to question God's basic justice. How can a holy, just, and loving God command such extreme violence? In these chapters the description of the destruction is very vivid. When the time came that the iniquity of the Amorites was sufficient (Gen. 15:16) God wanted the annihilation of this debased society to be complete. He also wanted to protect His people from their influence, their hostility to God, and their evil ways. From our very tiny, narrow perspective, it is totally inadequate for us to understand God's will and purposes, but in His mercy and grace, we do know that He has always reached out in love and forgiveness to those who will believe in Him.

INFORMATION - Read Joshua 9 - 12.

How would you tell the story of the Gibeonites or the miraculous event in Ch. 10 to children?
Try putting these great stories in your own words. It will help you be aware of the details.

OBSERVATION - Outline the events of these 4 chapters

Ch. 9

Ch. 10

Ch. 11

Ch. 12

INVESTIGATION ("look into, search")

1. Chap. 9 - Why were the Gibeonites successful in their deception?
Why did Joshua honor this treaty of peace even though it was based on false premises?
3. Chap. 10: 1 - 15 - One man calls out to God and God responds with miraculous intervention!
How do you explain what happened and why?
4. Chap. 10: 16 - Chap. 12 - God's judgment falls on the Canaanites. Why?
Study Leviticus 18 and Deut. 9: 1 - 6 for some of the answers. How are these standards the same or different today?
4. What did Joshua believe about God that enabled him to do what he did?
How did his beliefs affect his level of courage and strength?
5. If you were preaching from the Book of Joshua, what would be some application principles that you see in these historical events?

INVITATION -

The Courage to Believe - What is God inviting you to believe about Him and about yourself?
Are there any places where you need to "inquire of the Lord" before moving ahead?
Are there some "enemies" that you are facing and God is waiting for you to count on Him?
Do you believe that in Christ you can face tomorrow and experience His power?

"Courage is fear that has said its prayers."

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THE COURAGE TO FINISH WELL

It has been 45 years since Caleb and Joshua received the promise from the Lord that they and their descendants would someday inherit the land promised to their forefathers. That's a long time to wait in faith. Both of these men, however, "wholly followed the Lord" throughout their years and were blessed by Him. The conquest is complete now, and it is time for Joshua to assign portions of the land to the various tribes. Imagine, if you will, what it would be like to learn where you and your relatives will be able to settle down - to actually possess the land and experience a time of peace and prosperity. You would want to know all the details, wouldn't you? Wouldn't you think that after experiencing these amazing military victories the people would be fully committed to obeying the Lord, their God?

INFORMATION - Read Joshua 13 - 21.

Hidden in these lists of names and cities are vignettes and ideas which are thought provoking and interesting. Find some of them.

OBSERVATION -

There are some words and phrases that are repeated in these chapters. What is the significance of them?

| | |
|-------------|-----------------------|
| Possess - | Cities of Refuge |
| Inheritance | Cities of the Levites |
| Tabernacle | Any others? |

INVESTIGATION ("look into, search")

1. Think about Joshua at this point in his life. He is close to 100 years old. He has spent 40 years in the wilderness, 5 years as military leader for the conquest of the land, and now he is going to finish well by remaining courageous and strong - obedient to the final tasks given him. What are your observations?

2. Caleb - Chap. 14: 6 - 15 and 15: 13 - 19

What kind of a man is Caleb? Note some of his qualities and character traits.

In some instances, the Israelites were content to require forced labor from the Canaanites rather than driving them out. (Joshua 16: 10, 17: 13) What are your observations of this?

3. The children of Joseph are not content with their assignment of land. What is Joshua's view of their complaint or situation? (Joshua 17: 14 - 18)

5. The great climax to this part of Israel's history is in Joshua 21: 43 - 45.

Underscore THE LORD in these verses and think about what He had done for His children.

INVITATION -

1. If you knew that you only had a year or two to live, to finish well, what do you think you would choose to do differently than you are presently doing?
2. If you were really sure that victory (success, progress) was awaiting you, what challenge or opportunity would you consider? What risk would you be willing to take for God's glory? (Joshua 18: 3) What invitation would you accept from your Savior? Not one of His promises will fail, you know. So what's the hesitation? Talk it over with Him.

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THE COURAGE TO RECONCILE

"If there is anything that will drive us out of the land of victory, it is to become engaged in a controversy over misunderstood motives." (Ray Stedman's commentary on Joshua 22) Moses had given the Reubenites, the Gadites and half-tribe of Manasseh portions of land on the eastern side of the Jordan River. With that land, they had specific instructions that the men would help the other tribes conquer the land of Canaan before they could settle down. They had been faithful to Moses' instructions and now it was time to go home to their own families and land with Joshua's blessing. There was a concern that occurred to them about their future relationship with the people who were actually living in "the promised land" and so they wanted to be sure that they would always understand the identity of the people on the Eastern side of the river. So they built an altar and their motives were totally misunderstood. It happens all the time, doesn't it? Is reconciliation possible?

INFORMATION - Read Joshua 22. Try reading it out loud with expressions and emphasis.

OBSERVATION -

1. Headed Home - Joshua 22: 1 - 9 What does Joshua include in his farewell?
2. Misunderstood Motives - Joshua 22: 10 - 20 What was the big problem here?
3. An Opportunity to Explain - Joshua 22: 21 - 29 What made reconciliation possible?
4. Relationship Restored - Joshua 22:30 - 34 What was the result of this process?

INVESTIGATION ("look into, search")

1. As the men left Canaan to go home, Joshua blessed them. What do you think the significance of this could be? He also gave them some instructions. Why?
2. The angry Israelites gave 2 illustrations of the results of sin and rebellion. These are serious accusations made without enough information. What is the result of this?
Peor - Numbers 25 Achan - Joshua 7: 1 - 26
3. What did the Israelites do right/wrong? Do you think they went expecting reconciliation?
4. There is a great deal of concern for the next generation in this story. What are some of your observations about why this would be and what they did about it?
3. Do you have any illustrations of reconciliation that have resulted in a clear declaration that "The LORD IS GOD"?

INVITATION -

To invite someone to tell you "their story", to listen with care and openness, to receive the truth and change your mind is not easy. To be misunderstood and yet be able to tell the truth without defensiveness and to remain calm and clear and stay focused is not easy. What is the Lord's invitation to you today? Is there a chance that you have misunderstood someone else's motives? Are you ready for reconciliation? It is always God's desire for us to experience healing in all of our personal relationships and He will give you the courage that you need if you are willing.

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Lesson 9

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Joshua knew that his time on earth was soon to end. He wanted to remind the leaders and the people of God's goodness to them. He also wanted to challenge them to continue to "fear the Lord and serve Him". His greatest concern seemed to be the temptation to serve other gods or to be distracted by the values and snares of the Canaanites. His message was very clear. One - you must choose, consciously and continually, who your master will be. Two - you must throw away all of the other foreign gods. If Joshua were here today, do you think that he would have the same passionate concerns on his heart or would they be different?

INFORMATION - Read Joshua 23 - 24. Read these 2 chapters in a few translations.

OBSERVATION -

1. Summarize in your own words Joshua's farewell to the leaders - chapter 23
2. Summarize in your own words Joshua's message to the leaders and people - chapter 24
3. What are the similarities and differences between these 2 speeches?

INVESTIGATION ("look into, search")

1. How many times is the Lord, the Lord God of Israel, or the Lord our God mentioned?
Is there anything that you observe about this emphasis?
2. What do you think Joshua means by "fear the Lord and serve Him . . ." - Joshua 24: 14?
3. Why do you think Joshua is primarily concerned about the temptation to "forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods"? How do you see this in relationship to the 10 commandments - Exodus 20 or Deuteronomy 5?
4. What do you think the concept of "foreign gods" might include? What does our culture worship that might be a distraction for people today?
5. It's time to review the life of Joshua! What made the greatest impression on you?

INVITATION -

At the most pivotal or decisive times in your life, how have you responded to God's invitation to "serve only Him"? This would be a great time to review your choices and the consequences. Take time to listen to the Spirit of God and His words of conviction, forgiveness, comfort and/or challenge to you today. He is waiting to pour out His blessings and to keep all His promises to all those who will love and serve only Him. That includes YOU!