

MANual Lessons from Joshua

Our lessons from The MANual continue in the early part of the Old Testament with the book of Joshua. After venturing through the first five books (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy), we now look at the events that follow the conquest of the Promised Land for more lessons on becoming godly men.

The next several posts come from what some call the “History books of Israel.” These books are often out into two groups. The first, consisting of Joshua through Kings, is known as the Former Prophets. The pairs of 1 and 2 Samuel & 1 and 2 Kings were originally single books so Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel, and Kings were once considered a mirror set to the first five books of Moses. The second group, Chronicles through Esther, is known as The Writings. I’ll cover all these over the next several posts.

About the Book of Joshua

The setting for this book begins in the land of Canaan (now modern-day Israel). The 24-chapter book was written around 1390 B.C. by Joshua, except for the ending, which may have been written by a high priest named Phinehas. This book is broken down into two parts: chapters 1-12 about the conquest of Canaan, and chapters 13-24 about the assignment and settlement of this captured territory. Chapters 23 & 24 are about Joshua’s farewell address and death.

Joshua, along with Caleb, were the only two adults from the

one million people exiled from Egypt to live long enough to cross the Jordan River into Canaan. Thirty-nine years earlier, their ancestors failed to trust God to give them victory. They completed the mourning period for Moses and again had the opportunity to enter the land. Joshua then reminds this next generation to obey God's laws and how unbelief and disobedience brought tragedy. God gave this new generation a new opportunity to be different.



He Goes Before You

Preacher A.W. Tozer once said, "God is always previous". Eternal, he was before us. Ever-present, He goes before us. When we get to work, God is already there. When we arrive on the 19th of the month, He's already there waiting. He sees and oversees everything. Why? Because He is protective and caring.

This is a good reminder to watch out for our family and friends by looking down the road to anticipate potential obstacles and probable needs.

- What do you do today to protect and provide for your family?
- If you believe God is always ahead of you, how would your approach to life change?

The Lord commands Joshua to cross the Jordan River into the land that God promised Moses. Joshua instructed the high priest to carry the ark of the covenant to the Jordan, which would stop flowing just like the Red Sea parted when their ancestors left Egypt. A leader from each of the twelve tribes gathered a stone from the dried river and placed them together as a memorial to the deceased Israelites in the area on the other side of the Jordan River called Gilgal. There, the people renewed their commitment to God with covenantal ceremonies like Passover and circumcision.

Joshua then sends two spies secretly to look over the land again, especially the city of Jericho. God directs them to stop at the house of Rahab because it was part of the city wall and could provide a quick escape if needed. Rahab, a prostitute, hides the spies to protect them from the king's soldiers. God knows Rahab's heart was open to Him and she could be instrumental in the Israelite victory. As the spies leave, they instruct Rahab to leave a scarlet rope hanging from the window to signify when her family was safely inside. The spies report to Joshua that they are ready to take the land.



Authority

Joshua is about to lead the Israelites in one of the greatest military upsets in biblical history as they take over the city

of Jericho. His first step in preparation is to fall on his face in obedience and service to God. Unlike Moses, Joshua knew it was a mistake to rely on his own strength and wisdom. He did not want to fail God again.

- How do you prepare for the battle in your life like a conflict at work or with your spouse? Do you prefer to call your own shots and rely on your own wisdom?
- How can you learn to surrender your authority to God?

Chapter 6 tells the story of the fall of Jericho, which was one of the oldest cities in the world. Jericho was a symbol of military power and strength. Its walls were 25 feet high and 20 feet thick with soldiers standing guard on top of the walls so they could see for miles. The Canaanites considered it invincible.

But God gave Joshua some very complicated instructions. Joshua was to have his army march around the town once a day for six days, have seven priests carry a ram's horn and walk ahead of the ark. Then, on the seventh day, they were to march around the city seven times, blow their horns seven times, and have all the people shout until the walls of Jericho came down. The destruction killed everyone, except Rahab and her family because they hid the spies on their earlier trip.

Chapters 7-12 describe the attacks on the center of the land, overthrowing the southern and northern kings. Joshua and his army were moving from city-to-city, cleansing the land of its wickedness by destroying every trace of idol worship. He urged

the Israelites to continue to follow the Lord and worship God alone. But the people found it hard as they were prone to stray from their beliefs and faith in God.



You won't have hard times after you become a Christian

At times, we will all feel disappointed and spiritually disillusioned. The Christian life is often way harder than you might think. It's very frustrating and confusing when you ponder the way some people act who profess to be a Christian. We use phrases like "dead to sin", "new creation in Christ", "filled with the Spirit", and transformed or "born again." These can imply all our struggles will go away once we have faith. But that is not always the case.

It's often said the difference between our expectations and our actual experiences is equal to the level of our disappointment. God never says in the Bible that life on earth will be easy or perfect. He does promise to be with you always.

- Make a list of what you expect from God. Is it realistic? Do you need to adjust your expectations?
- Discuss this with your "inner circle" or trusted mentor.

Chapters 13-24 describe dividing the land among the twelve tribes of Israel. After seven years of battles, the Israelites have finally gained control of the entire land. At first, the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh went back to the area east of the Jordan River to the land given them by Moses. The tribes of Judah and Joseph (actually two tribes: Ephraim and the other half of Manasseh) received the land on the west that their ancestor Jacob had promised 450 years earlier. The rest of the tribes divided up the remaining land by casting sacred lots. The Levites received smaller towns and pasturelands nearby so they could continue to minister to the people.

By now, Joshua was getting old – somewhere between 85 and 100 years of age. But God still had work for him to do.

In chapter 22, Joshua gives the people the central message that Moses gave to their ancestors in Deuteronomy: obedience is based on love for God. Although they completed their military duties, Joshua reminded the people of their spiritual responsibility. The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh built an altar on the west side of the Jordan River. The other tribes feared another rebellion against God but realized it was simply a sign of unity and reminder that all future generations should worship the same God.



God Buddy Focus

Joshua's final words of encouragement are summed up like this: cling tightly to the Lord. He lays out the fundamentals of what it means to have faith in God: Honor and serve the Lord alone, and obey Him instead of following other gods.

By choosing God as Lord of our lives, we enter into a covenant with Him, whereby He promises not to only forgive us and love us, but to send us His Holy Spirit to help do his work here on earth.

Reminders that God is always ahead of you is what God Buddies need to help each other remain obedient and pursue a righteous life.

This week:

1. What do you know about your family's history? How has it affected you as an adult?
2. What makes you uncomfortable about making a covenant with God?
3. How do you feel the Holy Spirit working through you?
4. Get together to discuss this with some God Buddies.