

FIRST BAPTIST **ROGERS**

valiantwarrior

introduction

TO VALIANT WARRIORS

In the Old Testament, certain groups of men were noted as “valiant warriors” or “men of valor.” These men displayed courage and determination in battle. King David had his “mighty men.” These men proved themselves to be trustworthy in battlefield situations. These brave warriors were not limited to one tribe or people group. They were only limited by their courage and determination.

Valiant means possessing or showing courage or determination. Obviously, a warrior is one who is engaged in a war. A war has been underway since the Garden of Eden. The kingdom of God has been under assault by the kingdom of darkness. Satan’s temptation to Adam and Eve that led to their sin resulting in the Fall of all mankind was the declaration of war against God’s kingdom.



Biblical manhood and masculinity was also attacked in the garden on that day. Adam had been created first, given dominion over the earth and even named his wife. Satan did not initially go to Adam but to his wife, Eve with the temptation. It is understood that Adam was most certainly right there while his wife was being tempted. Adam abdicated his leadership responsibility in protecting his wife. He then followed her into the same sin that she had

committed. Since then, God’s people have battled against the kingdom of sin and darkness. But also, men have battled for biblical manhood and masculinity.

Men are at their best when they are valiant warriors, battling for the kingdom of God and rescuing the disadvantaged in the name of the King. Robert Lewis subtitled “Men’s Fraternity,” A Quest for Authentic Manhood. Valiant Warriors hopes to be another leg in the race or step in the journey in this quest. David challenged his son, Solomon in 2 Kings 2:2-4, “I am going the way of all the earth. Be strong, therefore, and show yourself a man. Keep the charge of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His ordinances, and His testimonies, according to what is written in the Law of Moses, that you may succeed in all that you do and wherever you turn, so that the LORD may carry out His promise which He spoke concerning me, saying, ‘If your sons are careful of their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.’”

We hope to show men how to be men, valiant warriors through this study. We believe that the key to men being transformed is first by the Word of God.

Another key is men in small groups for discussion, prayer, accountability and encouragement. As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another. It is out of that desire and vision that we have embraced the following guidestones.

Valiant Warrior Mission

To disciple men to follow Christ and to live and lead in their homes, churches, and communities for God's glory.

Valiant Warrior Vision

To see an army of men devoted to Christ leading their families and this church to serve Christ and bring Him glory until Jesus returns.

Valiant Warrior Strategy

To disciple men in small groups to lead their families and their church to serve Christ and bring Him glory until Jesus returns.

Valiant Warrior Promise

Judges 6:12 "The LORD is with you, O valiant warrior."

Valiant Warrior Code of Honor

To grow in Christlikeness personally. To be committed to my family and Christ's church. To intentionally encourage other men in Christlikeness and commitment to the church.

Valiant Warrior Scripture References

2 Chronicles 14:8 *"Now Asa had an army of 300,000 from Judah, bearing large shields and spears, and 280,000 from Benjamin, bearing shields and wielding bows; all of them were valiant warriors."*

Deuteronomy 3:18 *"Then I commanded you at that time, saying, 'The Lord your God has given you this land to possess it; all you valiant men shall cross over armed before your brothers, the sons of Israel.'"*

Joshua 1:14 *"Your wives, your little ones, and your cattle shall remain in the land which Moses gave you beyond the Jordan, but you shall cross before your brothers in battle array, all your valiant warriors, and shall help them."*

Joshua 8:3 *"So Joshua rose with all the people of war to go up to Ai; and Joshua chose 30,000 men, valiant warriors, and sent them out at night."*

Joshua 10:7 *"So Joshua went up from Gilgal, he and all the people of war with him and all the valiant warriors."*

Judges 6:12 "The angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, 'The Lord is with you, O valiant warrior.'"

Judges 11:1 "Now Jephthah the Gileadite was a valiant warrior..."

Judges 18:2 "So the sons of Dan sent from their family five men out of their whole number, valiant men from Zorah and Eshtaol, to spy out the land and to search it;"

1 Samuel 10:26 "Saul also went to his house at Gibeath; and the valiant men whose hearts God had touched went with him."

1 Samuel 14:52 "Now the war against the Philistines was severe all the days of Saul; and when Saul saw any mighty man or any valiant man, he attached him to his staff."

1 Samuel 18:17 "Then Saul said to David, 'Here is my older daughter Merab; I will give her to you as a wife, only be a valiant man for me and fight the Lord's battles.'"

1 Samuel 31:12 "All the valiant men rose and walked all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Beth-shan, and they came to Jabesh and burned them there."

2 Samuel 2:7 "Now therefore, let your hands be strong and be valiant; for Saul your lord is dead, and also the house of Judah has anointed me king over them."

2 Samuel 17:10 "And even the one who is valiant, whose heart is like the heart of a lion, will completely lose heart; for all Israel knows that your father is a mighty man and those who are with him are valiant men."

1 Chronicles 28:1 "Now David assembled at Jerusalem all the officials of Israel, the princes of the tribes, and the commanders of the divisions that served the king, and the commanders of thousands, and the commanders of hundreds, and the overseers of all the property and livestock belonging to the king and his sons, with the officials and the mighty men, even all the valiant men."

2 Chronicles 13:3 "Abijah began the battle with an army of valiant warriors, 400,000 chosen men, while Jeroboam drew up in battle formation against him with 800,000 chosen men who were valiant warriors."

session one

A STUDY OF JOSHUA
THE MAKING OF A MAN

God made a man, Adam, out of the dust of the earth. Out of Adam, God created a woman. Out of the God-ordained relationship between Adam and Eve in biblical marriage, God continued to create men and women. But there is much more to making a man than just conception or birth. God's hand is evident in the making of men throughout their lifetime.

Joshua will be the subject of this study. Joshua was a man of incredible experience. He learned at the feet of Moses. He experienced the presence and power of God in battle, in prayer, and in faith. He experienced disappointment and defeat along with victory. He was certainly a valiant warrior in every way.

Joshua first appears in Exodus 17 on the battlefield as a warrior who fought against the Amalekites as Moses stood on the hill with his staff of God in his hand. He was by no means the central character of the story. When Moses' hand was lifted, Israel prevailed. When his hand came down, Amalek prevailed. Because Moses' hands were heavy, Aaron and Hur held up his hands so Israel prevailed. Verse 13 says Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the edge of his sword.

So, we know Joshua was a mighty warrior. He was battle tested. His victory was so significant the Lord told Moses to write in a book as a memorial and recite it to Joshua that God will blot the memory of Amalek from the under heaven. This is also the occasion where we find the title of God, "the LORD is My Banner."

Read the story.

Exodus 17:9-16

"So Moses said to Joshua, "Choose men for us and go out, fight against Amalek. Tomorrow I will station myself on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand." Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought against Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. So it came about when Moses held his hand up, that Israel prevailed, and when he let his hand down, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy. Then they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it; and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other. Thus his hands were steady until the sun set. So Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this in a book as a memorial and recite it to Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven." Moses built an altar and named it The LORD is My Banner; and he said, "The LORD has sworn; the LORD will have war against Amalek from generation to generation."

Joshua was a warrior leader. 9

"So Moses said to Joshua, "Choose men for us and go out, fight against Amalek."

Joshua was a warrior who was engaged in the fight. He was not far off sending someone into battle to fight his fight. He was actually fighting someone else's fight. He was fighting Moses' fight, but he was really fighting God's fight. He was a man under authority following the directions of the God-appointed leader.

We often demonstrate potential for future leadership by our present followship of the God-appointed leader. Without a doubt, Moses was God's leader for that time. Refresh your memory with our Valiant Warrior study on Biblical Leadership from the life of Moses. I have often said I think Moses was the greatest leader ever, apart from Jesus Himself. Joshua had a front row seat to all the miracles God performed through and for Moses. Joshua was probably 40 years old or so when he followed Moses out of Egyptian bondage. Moses was 80 years old when he led the people out of Egypt.

Joshua, most likely under the iron hand of Pharaoh, had made those bricks without straw and suffered mistreatment at Pharaoh's hand growing up under Egyptian slavery. He saw the return of Moses was met with mixed reviews from his countrymen. He heard the vision Moses shared with the people. This vision was an answer to their prayers. But this vision would require them to leave this land of Egypt where they had been since the days of Joseph. This was the only place these people knew. It was a hard and harsh place, but it was home.

Joshua was always an early adopter. He believed in the vision that Moses shared. He had an ability to see what God was doing whether it was here, the promised land spying report, or conquering Canaan. Somewhere and somehow, he became a close associate of Moses. He became a key colleague. He would eventually become his successor. But at this point, he was his soldier. He was his warrior. He was Moses' sword and battlefield leader.

Moses not only sent Joshua into battle, but he trusted Joshua to "choose men for us." Joshua would choose the men who would fight alongside him against the Amalekites. Joshua got to pick his own team. Most great leaders relish the opportunity to build their own team. Often, circumstances are such that leaders must lead a team someone else has built. We often hear people talk about a new coach not playing with his own players, especially when the new coach is not doing so well.

Moses demonstrated trust in Joshua and organizational leadership in delegating responsibility to someone who had been mentored by Moses. Moses learned delegation from his father-in-law, Jethro. He was now practicing it and teaching it. Joshua benefited from Moses' delegation and learned from it. He would continue to lead men into battle. He would divide up the land among the leaders of Israel. He would have to trust others and delegate to others.

How do you think Joshua's military experience helped prepare him for the future? If you have a military veteran in your group, ask them how the military helped prepare them for things in their future. What are some lessons learned through military service?

Joshua saw the hand of God make a difference. 11-13

"So it came about when Moses held his hand up, that Israel prevailed, and when he let his hand down, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy. Then they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it; and Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side and one on the other. Thus his hands were steady until the sun set. So Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword."

As the battle ensued, it became apparent that when Moses' hands were in the air, the Israelites prevailed. But when his hands lowered, the Amalekites prevailed. I am sure this was most obvious to Joshua as the one who was actually in the battle. I can see Joshua crying out, "Help that man keep his hands in the air!" Joshua had a first-hand lesson on the importance of prayer in the battle. He learned prayer is the battle. The physical battle is just reaping the rewards of the spiritual battle that has already been won.

Aaron and Hur held up the hands of Moses, so Joshua prevailed over the Amalekites. This battle was significant in that God told Moses to write it in a book and recite it to Joshua. God wanted Joshua to take note of this battle and to have a record of it so he would remember it always. Joshua learned the lesson of prayer and dependence on God. He learned the lesson of fighting hard. He learned the lesson of following God and looking for the hand of God. He learned the lesson of following God's leader.

Joshua's early success and walk with God was closely associated with his relationship with Moses. The influence and impact Moses had on Joshua's life was immeasurable.

Joshua saw the benefit of prayer while in the battle. Can you think of a time or times when you have been prayed for and you can relate a specific victory resulting from the prayers of others? (Maybe a test, a difficult task, a critical decision)

How did Joshua benefit from the influence of Moses? Who have been your mentors in life? Some of your mentors have been in business or the area of your work or your recreation. Hopefully, some of your mentors have been in your spiritual life also. Discuss how you can appreciate your mentors, but maybe more importantly, discuss how you can be a mentor. How do you actually mentor others? What are the first steps to getting started? (Invite a younger man to Valiant Warrior next week to be in your group.)

The next time we see Joshua in the Bible is in Exodus 24 when he accompanies Moses upon Mt. Sinai. He has gone from being a battlefield commander to now a close associate. On the battlefield, Aaron and Hur were right by Moses' side during the spiritual battle taking place.

Read the story.

"Now the LORD said to Moses, "Come up to Me on the mountain and remain there, and I will give you the stone tablets with the law and the commandment which I have written for their instruction." So Moses arose with Joshua his servant, and Moses went up to the mountain of God. But to the elders he said, "Wait here for us until we return to you. And behold, Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a legal matter, let him approach them." Then Moses went up to the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. The glory of the LORD rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; and on the seventh day He called to Moses from the midst of the cloud. And to the eyes of the sons of Israel the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a consuming fire on the mountain top. Moses entered the midst of the cloud as he went up to the mountain; and Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights."

Joshua is called the servant of Moses. He accompanied Moses on Mt. Sinai where the Ten Commandments were received. He and Moses spent 40 days on Mt. Sinai covered with the cloud of the presence of God.

Consider what kind of impact that had on Joshua. I recently had a conversation with a friend who wondered if people had an intimate, personal relationship with God. Some of us grew up in a generation when we had revivalists like Ron Dunn, Manley Beasley, Jack Taylor, and Sidlow Baxter. People would sit and listen to long sermons for five, seven, or even more days in a row. Henry Blackaby wrote *Experiencing God* with Claude King out of their experiences of walking with God. Charles Culpepper, missionary to China, spoke and wrote about the Shantung Revival. People would spend extended time alone with God in prayer and seeking Him. That is in comparison to today's microwave spiritual experiences. It cannot last too long or cost too much. People are easily distracted and have brief attention spans. While I believe that is true, it also could be the reason we don't walk with God or sense the presence and power of God. And why most people don't even know what you are talking about when you speak about the hand of God or the presence of God or the power of God.

Some believers can look at certain watershed moments (and I include the plural because I think there are more than one) as those times God moved them forward mightily in their faith, hope, love, and fruitfulness.

This time on the mountain of God for 40 days and 40 nights may have been the single most important experience Joshua ever had. It was those 40 days that would see him through 40 years in ministry of the wilderness and wandering. This is a point that is easily missed, because he is just mentioned almost in passing. This entire book of Exodus and this passage is really about Moses. Everyone knows you read the book of Joshua to find out about Joshua. Moses dominates Exodus, Leviticus,

Numbers, and Deuteronomy. A friend of mine wrote a book entitled *Big Doors Swing on Small Hinges*.

I believe this is the hinge point for Joshua. This 40-day spiritual adventure would be life-changing, life-altering, and life-sustaining for the rest of his life. I believe there are those special moments when God really marks a man's life. Sometimes men are marked by things that are not so good. Some men have been marked by an abusive father, an uncaring mother, a divorce, a death, a breakup, or a break down. God can use these kinds of moments to get our attention and bring about significant change. But every man needs a 40-day experience with God that will carry them through the hard times, the alone times, the victorious times, and the defeat times. Our failures and sin and breakdowns mark us, but they do not have to define us.

Men, long for and look for the mountain experience with an experienced climber like a Moses who can lead you and take you to place where God lives and reveals Himself to mere mortal men.

Discuss what Joshua experienced in the 40 days on Mt. Sinai. Has there ever been a time when you experienced the presence of God in a powerful way? When was that time? What was going on in your life then? What happened? What changed? How did it impact your life?

What do you think needs to be in place in your life and the lives of others to experience the presence and power of God? Why do you think we rarely hear about revival, either personal revival or corporate revival? How can we be like Moses or Joshua in experiencing the presence and power of God?

The next sighting of Joshua was in chapter 33 after coming down from the mountain to the return to the sinful reality of a golden calf. After God deals with His people over their sin, He calls Moses to begin the journey to the Promised Land. While they would go on this journey, they would set up a tent of meeting or the tabernacle outside the camp. This tent of meeting was where the presence of God would reside. Moses would go into the tent of meeting and the cloud of God's glory would descend upon it much like the mountain of God Mt. Sinai as Moses ascended it. Chapter 33 of Exodus is one of the great chapters of Moses' intercession for God's people and pleading with God for His presence and His glory. One verse in this chapter mentions Joshua. Again, this could be easily missed, but I think it is very significant and is a continuation of his mountain experience in the presence of God.

Exodus 33:11

"Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses returned to the camp, his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent."

Moses would go into the tent of meeting and the pillar of cloud would fall upon it. The people would stand in the doorway of their tent and watch Moses go to it. Here we see in 33:11 that Joshua would not depart from the tent. Again, the presence of God was strong in this tent of meeting. Joshua had experienced the presence of God and he desired it and valued it. He would not leave the tent. Some suggest this means Joshua set up his tent outside the camp and close to the tent of meeting to protect it or watch over it.

Some past generation teachers have given to much allegorizing, such as A. W. Pink seeing a connection between Moses leaving the tent to minister to the camp and Joshua staying at the tent connected to the power of God's presence. He even goes so far as to suggest Joshua represents the Holy Spirit and Moses represents Christ. I will not go that far in this passage. But I do think it is legitimate to recognize Joshua has been closely connected to these Old Testament locations where the presence of God is so heavy that it is visible as smoke and a pillar of cloud to the human eye. Joshua had seen this pillar of cloud along with a pillar of fire as the children of Israel were led out of Egypt.

Without question, once a person has experienced the touch of God and true awakening, he or she longs for more. But also, that significant experience is sufficient for long term impact upon a life. We certainly see that in our salvation that accomplishes a permanent and eternal impact that certainly lasts forever. But even with that immeasurable gift, refreshing and renewal are desirable and available.

Discuss why Joshua may have not left the tent of meeting. What experiences have greatly impacted your life spiritually? Discuss how these experiences have impacted your life. What are some repeatable experiences, practices, or disciplines men should continue in to help them grow spiritually and have victory daily in their spiritual life?

Joshua was devotedly loyal to Moses. It appears much like it would be of David and Saul that the younger would never usurp the older. Joshua was the servant of Moses to the end. Here we see, as Eldad and Medad were prophesying in the camp, that Joshua requested Moses would restrain them. Moses responded with the question, "Are you jealous for my sake?" A valiant warrior is a loyal friend who stands up for his brother when his brother is not there.

Numbers 11:27-29

"So a young man ran and told Moses and said, 'Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.' Then Joshua the son of Nun, the attendant of Moses from his youth, said, 'Moses, my lord, restrain them.'" But Moses said to him, "Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD'S people were prophets, that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them!"

Discuss what loyalty to Christ and to Christian brothers looks like.

session two

A STUDY OF JOSHUA
FAITH, COURAGE, AND COMMISSIONING

The most well-known account of Joshua outside the biblical book that bears his name is Numbers 14. This is the story of Moses sending twelve spies into the Promised Land in preparation for going into the Promised Land. The Jordan River was the geographical barrier to these wanderers. But the spiritual barrier would prove to be the one that keeps them out of the Promised Land for 40 years.

Joshua was one of the men selected to go into the land of Canaan and bring back a report. When the men came back, ten of the men reported giants in the land who would prohibit them from going into the land. Two of the spies, Joshua and Caleb, gave a minority report of a land flowing with milk and honey God would deliver into their hands. Unfortunately, the majority opinion carried the day. This lack of faith consensus cost all the people over 20 years old the Promised Land except Joshua and Caleb.

Read the story.

Numbers 14:6-19

"Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, of those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes; and they spoke to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, saying, 'The land which we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. 'If the LORD is pleased with us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us—a land which flows with milk and honey. 'Only do not rebel against the LORD; and do not fear the people of the land, for they will be our prey. Their protection has been removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them.' But all the congregation said to stone them with stones. Then the glory of the LORD appeared in the tent of meeting to all the sons of Israel. The LORD said to Moses, 'How long will this people spurn Me? And how long will they not believe in Me, despite all the signs which I have performed in their midst? 'I will smite them with pestilence and dispossess them, and I will make you into a nation greater and mightier than they.' But Moses said to the LORD, 'Then the Egyptians will hear of it, for by Your strength You brought up this people from their midst, and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land. They have heard that You, O LORD, are in the midst of this people, for You, O LORD, are seen eye to eye, while Your cloud stands over them; and You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night. 'Now if You slay this people as one man, then the nations who have heard of Your fame will say, 'Because the LORD could not bring this people into the land which He promised them by oath, therefore He slaughtered them in the wilderness.' 'But now, I pray, let the power of the Lord be great, just as You have declared, 'The LORD is slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, forgiving iniquity and transgression; but He will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generations.' 'Pardon, I pray, the iniquity of this people according to the greatness of Your lovingkindness, just as You also have forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now.'"

Numbers 14:30

"Surely you shall not come into the land in which I swore to settle you, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun."

Notice how Joshua's report is tied to the LORD and His favor. He was not presumptuous just assuming they would win.

"If the LORD is pleased with us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us—a land which flows with milk and honey"

The condition for their success is found in the LORD. He must first be pleased with them. Then He must be the One who brings them into the land. He had learned the importance of depending on the Lord and the necessity of the Lord's hand and power to accomplish His will. Joshua also would be familiar with the big picture of God's plan and will.

Joshua was there when the children of Israel cried out for God to deliver them out of Egyptian bondage. He was aware of all God had done to get them out. He was also aware of the promise to get them into the Promised Land. God's power to get them out combined with His promise to get them in was a powerful combination. The immediate and apparent hurdle of giants in the land did not negate the ultimate plan of God of His people in the Promised Land. They had already escaped Pharaoh, walked through a split Red Sea, been led by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, and had been provided manna, water, and meat. Surely God could provide the land, especially if He promised it.

Discuss how previous experiences with God helped Joshua as he was sent into Canaan as a spy. What experiences have you had that help you today to face challenges in your life? Discuss how your family life, your work life, and your church life are impacted by previous experiences with God.

Joshua was a man of faith.

His faith was not just in faith. His faith was in the Lord who had done all these things Joshua had seen already. But his faith was also in what God had not yet done, like giving them the land. He was a man of faith in the great God Who could and had delivered. Joshua had been with God in battle, on the mountain of God, and in the tent of meeting. This was not his first rodeo, so to speak.

Joshua knew God's bigger picture plan was to bring His people into the Promised Land. He also knew they were not yet in the Promised Land. He saw his life journey in light of God's bigger plan. Since he knew of God's greater plan, he was prepared and ready when Moses selected him to be one of the spies to go and investigate the Promised Land.

Based upon what Joshua knew about God's plan, he saw things differently than people who walked in fear.

How did faith cause Joshua and Caleb to give a different report than the other ten spies gave? Compare and contrast what it looks like to walk in fear and to walk in faith. Give some examples of how people view things differently based on them walking in fear or walking in faith. Some people lead based on fear instead of faith. What is the difference in leaders who lead by faith than those who lead by fear? Read Hebrews 11:1, 6 and discuss.

Joshua was a man of courage.

When everyone else is saying one thing, it takes courage to say something totally opposite even if it is the truth. It comes down to who you want to make happy or be popular with. Too many men choose friendship with the world over friendship with God. Joshua had seen the fickleness of the people and faithfulness of God. He did not hesitate or struggle in voicing the minority opinion of faith and victory. His courage was not born on that day. He had already learned it, nurtured it, and practiced it. It was as natural and normal as taking his next breath for him to speak of what the Lord could do.

He was not denying the fact of giants in the land. He was just focused on the Lord, who is greater than any giant in the land. If it is the Lord's will and plan, then a giant cannot stop the Lord. Years later, a youngster name David would stand up against a giant while the Hebrew armies refused to come out and fight. His testimony would be similar to Joshua's in that the Lord will deliver you into my hand on this day. Joshua's faith that gave him courage on that occasion was not in himself, but it was in the Lord.

We have, and will continue to see, over and over again the command to Joshua to be strong and courageous. As a matter of fact, that is the commissioning command given to Joshua. He was a man of courage who needed to be reminded and encouraged to remain a man of courage.

Can you think of an example when you saw someone share a minority report, but you knew it was the right report? Discuss what courage is. Give examples when you have seen someone demonstrate courage. What are some ways men need to demonstrate courage in spiritual matters especially? As in the case of Joshua where what he said did not change the outcome of the majority, consider what difference it makes whether a person has courage or not when the outcome does not appear to be impacted.

Joshua was a man of endurance.

The story does not end at the Jordan River on that day. For all except Joshua and Caleb, the story all but ended. It would just take 40 years to get to their wandering end. Unfortunately, Moses, Caleb, and Joshua would have to wander around for 40 years while their unbelieving cowardly brothers died off before Joshua and Caleb could enter the Promised Land. Sometimes we suffer the consequences of

the sins and choices of others. When one spouse has an affair, it impacts the other spouse. When a child becomes pregnant out of wedlock, it impacts the entire family. When someone chooses an alcohol or drug addiction, it impacts everyone around them. When a family member chooses an immoral lifestyle, it impacts everyone in the family.

Joshua had to endure the wilderness for 40 years not because of his sin. He had to pay a price because of the sin of his people. We pay the price when our loved ones make good choices and bad choices. Your family and friends and church pay a price or receive a blessing based upon the decisions and choices you make.

Although Joshua had to endure the wilderness in spite of his choice, he did have the promise of the future land. He was not struggling with no hope. The Promised Land, crossing the Jordan has always been a picture of heaven. The promise was really better than the land. They did not conquer the land perfectly or completely. They did not possess the land fully and properly. It was a real land, but it also pointed to a greater land and a greater promise.

The name Joshua in Hebrew is the same name as Jesus. It means "the Lord saves." Many scholars through the years have pointed out Moses represents the Law and Joshua represents the promise. The Law could not possess the promise. The promise is possessed by faith. Joshua was a man of great, enduring, loyal faith. God would give him the land everywhere he would place his feet. He had to walk and step out into faith to possess the land. The Lord would do it. He would cause the Jericho walls to fall without shooting an arrow or raising a spear. Possession was all about believing that resulted in action based on faith.

Discuss how you can endure when it seems like everything is going against you. How do you deal with suffering because of the decisions and choices of others not your choices or decisions? Discuss the statement, "The promise is really better than the land." Discuss how we live life based on a promise.

If there was ever any doubt who would succeed Moses, God made it very clear over and over in Scripture. We will look at passages that ring of a formal commissioning and those that allude to it overtly and covertly.

Read the story.

Numbers 27:18-23 (The Commissioning of Joshua)

"So the LORD said to Moses, "Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him; and have him stand before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and commission him in their sight. "You shall put some of your authority on him, in order that all the congregation of the sons of Israel may obey him. "Moreover, he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before the LORD. At his command they shall go out and at his command they shall come in, both he and the sons of Israel with him,

even all the congregation." Moses did just as the LORD commanded him; and he took Joshua and set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation. Then he laid his hands on him and commissioned him, just as the LORD had spoken through Moses."

Whose idea was it to commission Joshua? How important was it for Joshua to stand before the people to be commissioned? Discuss this verse.

"You shall put some of your authority on him, in order that all the congregation of the sons of Israel may obey him."

Even Moses will not enter the Promised Land (1:37), Joshua will enter in. So, the Lord tells Moses to encourage Joshua.

Deuteronomy 1:38

"Joshua the son of Nun, who stands before you, he shall enter there; encourage him, for he will cause Israel to inherit it."

Moses again requests to be able to go into the Promised Land (3:25), but God reaffirms Joshua will be the one who will cross over and lead the people to cross over into the Promised Land. The mantle of leadership and responsibility is being passed from Moses to Joshua. This process seems to be over some period and through multiple occasions as opposed to one singular ceremony or event. Through all of this, we do not see Joshua as prominent as long as Moses is still alive and in the picture. Even the last chapter of Deuteronomy is focused on the death of Moses.

Discuss Moses' repeated request to enter the Promised Land. Consider how he felt and how he finished. Consider how important it is to be focused on the Lord, His plan, His purpose, and His glory to finish well. What are some keys to finishing well?

Moses continued to encourage Joshua in his courage and leadership, although he personally wanted to cross over to the Promised Land. Here again we see God's plans and purposes are greater than ours. Those whose hearts are totally surrendered to His will do not forsake the plans of God. Joshua continues to be affirmed in God's call of leadership on his life.

Deuteronomy 3:21-28

"I commanded Joshua at that time, saying, 'Your eyes have seen all that the LORD your God has done to these two kings; so the LORD shall do to all the kingdoms into which you are about to cross. 'Do not fear them, for the LORD your God is the one fighting for you.' "I also pleaded with the LORD at that time, saying, 'O Lord GOD, You have begun to show Your servant Your greatness and Your strong hand; for what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do such works and mighty acts as Yours? 'Let me, I pray, cross over and see the fair land that is beyond the Jordan, that good hill country and Lebanon.' "But the LORD was angry with me on your account, and would not listen to me; and the LORD said to me, 'Enough! Speak to

Me no more of this matter. 'Go up to the top of Pisgah and lift up your eyes to the west and north and south and east, and see it with your eyes, for you shall not cross over this Jordan. 'But charge Joshua and encourage him and strengthen him, for he shall go across at the head of this people, and he will give them as an inheritance the land which you will see.'"

Joshua continues to be affirmed in God's plan for him to lead the people into the Promised Land.

Deuteronomy 31:3

"It is the LORD your God who will cross ahead of you; He will destroy these nations before you, and you shall dispossess them. Joshua is the one who will cross ahead of you, just as the LORD has spoken."

Here is the first of many calls for Joshua to be strong and courageous. The future tense verbs Moses uses speak of the certainty in which God will cause the success of Joshua in fulfilling God's plan.

Deuteronomy 31:7

"Then Moses called to Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, "Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land which the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall give it to them as an inheritance."

Even the Lord continues to affirm Joshua's call to the Promised Land at the time of Moses' death. Another commissioning is in order.

Deuteronomy 31:14

"Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, the time for you to die is near; call Joshua, and present yourselves at the tent of meeting, that I may commission him." So Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves at the tent of meeting."

Deuteronomy 31:23

"Then He commissioned Joshua the son of Nun, and said, "Be strong and courageous, for you shall bring the sons of Israel into the land which I swore to them, and I will be with you."

Deuteronomy 34:9-12

"Now Joshua the son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him; and the sons of Israel listened to him and did as the LORD had commanded Moses. Since that time no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, for all the signs and wonders which the LORD sent him to perform in the land of Egypt against Pharaoh, all his servants, and all his land, and for all the mighty power and for all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel."

The repeated affirmation of Joshua by the Lord and by Moses emphasizes several aspects of God's call upon Joshua. One aspect is the repeated affirmation should clarify in the minds of everyone what the will of God is. The repeated truth was the children of Israel were to go into the Promised Land and Joshua was going to lead them in. This is true of many things in Scripture. The Word repeatedly instructs men to repent and believe to be saved. The Word repeatedly affirms men should be filled with the Holy Spirit and walk in the truth and love. The Word repeatedly instructs men to avoid sexual immorality and lusts of the flesh. The Word repeatedly reminds the Lord is with you. The Word repeatedly instructs men to love, protect, and provide. The list goes on and on.

The repeated affirmation also acts as an encouragement to Joshua. He, like everyone, could be easily discouraged. If God said it one time, that would be enough. But we see the Lord and Moses repetitiously affirming and encouraging Joshua. Moses has become the Barnabas of the Old Testament in Joshua's life. Moses was at the end of his life and was passing the baton to successor, his son in the faith.

The repeated affirmation serves as a reminder of what God wanted Joshua to do. It could have been easy for Joshua to forget the plan for the invasion of Canaan and instead just wander around the Jordan River's banks doing military operations but not engaging in battle.

The repeated affirmation serves as an emphasis on what was important to the Lord's plan. The promise was given to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and now Joshua. It is the ultimate promise of God that will be ultimately fulfilled in a land and city whose maker is God.

Discuss why and how Joshua was qualified for this new leadership responsibility.

Why are repeated affirmations necessary or important?

Discuss how Moses passes the baton of the faith to Joshua. What did Moses do along the way to make this transition possible? Consider Moses and Joshua both in this transition. Discuss how sometimes the transition to the next generation in leadership does not go well. What are some reasons it does not go well? What are some key things in helping for transitions to go well?

Consider how you can be engaged in discipleship. Invest in younger men. Have an older mentor. Be an encourager to someone. Raise up the next generation of valiant warriors.

In his case, as always, the eternal rule held good, that faithfulness in a few things is the condition of rule over many things; and the loyalty of a servant is the stepping-stone to the royalty of the throne. Of the Highest it is said that he was obedient into death even the death of the cross; and that, therefore, God highly exalted him, and gave him the Name above every name. We must learn obedience by the things that we suffer ere we can be lifted from the dunghill to sit with princes. ¹

session three

A STUDY OF JOSHUA
BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS

Joshua's day of leadership had finally arrived. He had been preparing his entire life for this day. Certainly, this was also a day many were not looking forward to, including Joshua. In order for Joshua to assume leadership, Moses would not be allowed into the Promised Land and he would die. Moses would "die climbing" as I and many others have noted.

The Lord gave Moses a visual tour of the Promised Land from Mount Nebo (Deuteronomy 34).

"Although Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died, his eye was not dim, nor his vigor abated. " Deuteronomy 34:7

The last chapter in Deuteronomy and the first chapter in Joshua are great records of God's hand in transitioning leadership. The first two lessons of this Valiant Warrior study have addressed the preparation of Joshua and the mentoring of Moses. It has also emphasized, most importantly, the hand of God in preparing the next generation for leadership.

Valiant Warrior was born out of desire to pass the baton of biblical leadership to 300 young men over a ten-year period in the life of First Baptist Rogers. This quest is also an investment in older men who will in turn invest in younger men. This lesson demonstrates in the Old Testament with high profile leaders a successful succession plan of passing the baton of spiritual leadership to the next generation. For me, this is very important and may be the most important investment of my ministry life moving forward.

Paul put it this way in 2 Timothy 2:2, *"These things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."*

For Moses, if he did not have someone to pass his leadership mantle to, all his leadership would have come to a crashing end short of the Promised Land.

There are so many lessons to learn from Moses and Joshua. As we have mentioned, the loyalty and respect Joshua offered toward Moses over a long period of time is moving. The willingness of Moses to invest, give responsibility, and even commission Joshua to do what Moses really wanted to do all the way up to his death was exemplary biblical leadership. The way Joshua submitted to the leadership of Moses and learned leadership on the job was a great pattern. The way Joshua saw Moses walk with God and hear from God and obey God was life-shaping.

Joshua followed Moses primarily because Joshua followed God. He also followed Moses because Moses followed God. While it certainly was an emotional transition from seeing his mentor die and not go into the Promised Land, Joshua was not left alone with no guidance. Joshua had learned to hear the voice of the Lord for

himself. So, Joshua heard the voice of God through Moses in his commissioning, but he also heard the voice of God plain and clear in Joshua chapter one as the Lord spoke directly to Joshua.

The Lord told him many things, but one thing that stands out we have already seen from his commissioning from Moses is the command to "Be strong and courageous."

Deuteronomy 31:7

"Then Moses called to Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, "Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land which the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall give it to them as an inheritance."

Deuteronomy 31:23

"Then He commissioned Joshua the son of Nun, and said, "Be strong and courageous, for you shall bring the sons of Israel into the land which I swore to them, and I will be with you."

Joshua 1:6-7, 9

"Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. "Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go."

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

Joshua would have all he needed to be successful. He just needed to be strong and successful. As we look at the life of Joshua, remember in the same way God provides all that Joshua needs to do what God wants him to do, God provides everything you need to do what God has called you to do. You and I just need to be strong and courageous in the matters God has given direction.

Read the story.

"Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant, saying, "Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel. "Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses. "From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory. "No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. "Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. "Only be strong and very courageous;

be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. "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 success. "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go." Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, "Pass through the midst of the camp and command the people, saying, 'Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you are to cross this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you, to possess it.'" To the Reubenites and to the Gadites and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joshua said, "Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, 'The LORD your God gives you rest and will give you this land.' "Your wives, your little ones, and your cattle shall remain in the land which Moses gave you beyond the Jordan, but you shall cross before your brothers in battle array, all your valiant warriors, and shall help them, until the LORD gives your brothers rest, as He gives you, and they also possess the land which the LORD your God is giving them. Then you shall return to your own land, and possess that which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you beyond the Jordan toward the sunrise." They answered Joshua, saying, "All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. "Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you; only may the LORD your God be with you as He was with Moses. "Anyone who rebels against your command and does not obey your words in all that you command him, shall be put to death; only be strong and courageous."

Joshua heard the voice of God.

"Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant, saying..."

Joshua had learned how to hear the voice of the Lord for himself. Moses was dead. The people were mourning and weeping. Their leader who had led two generations of Hebrews was no longer alive. The one who had received the Ten Commandments had died. The one who had led them out of Egyptian bondage had died. The one who led them through the parted Red Sea had died. The one who had performed many miracles and won many victories by the hand of God had died. The one who had lived with and stuck with and interceded for before God on their behalf and put up with their disobedience, lack of faith, whining, griping, and criticism had died. Their great leader had died. But God had not died. God's vision had been passed on to Joshua, so God's vision was alive and well.

Spiritual leadership must be passed down. Spiritual leaders must be able to hear the voice of God.

The voice of God is overwhelmingly and primarily heard today through the Word of God. You cannot hear, discern, or know the voice of God apart from reading,

studying, memorizing, and mediating upon the Bible. Because the Bible is the voice of God. It is the Word of God.

All impressions, thoughts, visions, dreams, etc. are to be tested by the Word of God. Our personal experiences are secondary and subject to the Word of God. What God has said and written in His Word is more important and more powerful than any extrabiblical word or impression that comes from a person. Anyone who elevates their impression or vision or whatever to the same level of certainty and authority of the Word of God (the Bible) should not be trusted or listened to as a teacher or leader.

Joshua had followed the word of God spoken through Moses. But when Moses was no longer there, Joshua still heard the word of God. He had developed a relationship with God. Moses without question had mentored him in that. Our responsibility as spiritual leaders and fathers is to help our spiritual children to learn to hear the voice of God for themselves. Again, I am saying we need to help people read, memorize, meditate, study, and understand the Bible for themselves. This is a sign of spiritual maturity. As we have often illustrated, a baby must be fed, then learns to feed themselves, and then learns to feed others. The same is true for the spiritual growth of a valiant warrior.

Describe your spiritual growth process and how the Word of God was key in that process.

Joshua, like Moses, was a servant.

"...of Moses the servant of the LORD, that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant, saying,"

Joshua was emotionally stable.

"Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel."

Joshua was dealing with the grief of his forty plus year mentor and his closest friend and spiritual father. He was among the grieving. In Deuteronomy 34:8, it tells us the sons of Israel wept for 30 days, then the days of weeping and mourning for Moses came to an end. Immediately then, the Lord says "now therefore arise." Joshua was now the unquestioned leader and it was time for him to lead.

Valiant warriors must be emotionally stable. We live in a time where mental disease and emotional disorders are prevalent. We certainly do not want to be insensitive to those who struggle with depression, emotional disorders, and mental disease. We support and recommend those who struggle in these areas seek help. We would first encourage you to seek the Lord's help through spiritual disciplines of Bible reading, prayer, personal and church gathered worship, serving, witnessing, and giving. God uses all these disciplines to help us grow spiritually into Christlikeness. If you are committed to these things or are struggling in these areas (which a lot of us do), then we would encourage you to be a part of smaller biblical community of brothers in Christ, like a Valiant Warrior group and LIFE group. This community needs to be one you can be honest and vulnerable with. This place should feel like a safe place for encouragement, prayer, and biblical guidance. If you are practicing spiritual

disciplines with a thriving community of brothers who love and pray for you and are still struggling, then you may want to make an appointment to meet with a pastor for further spiritual guidance. Sometimes our pastors recommend further professionally licensed biblical counseling for particular issues and experiences that may need a more in-depth consideration. Sometimes extensive therapy and medication may be in order in some severe cases of mental and emotional issues.

Leaders must be emotionally strong and stable. It was time for Joshua to arise and lead. For Nehemiah, he had to arise and build. Spiritual leaders must arise from whatever it is that serves as an excuse or obstacle to their leadership. Some of these obstacles are legitimate obstacles that are understandable discouragements and barriers. But when God says, arise. He will give you all that is necessary for you to be able to arise.

How do we overcome discouragement and even depression? Can you give some examples when you had to overcome not feeling like doing something that was important for your family, your church, or a group of people you were leading?

Joshua had a clear vision of what to do.

"...of Moses the servant of the LORD, that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant, saying..."

This was not a new vision or mission. He had been hearing this his entire life. Now it is the time to do what he had heard about since he was a young Hebrew boy. God was allowing him to be the leader of what his people had longed for and looked for. But more importantly, it was what God had promised.

Joshua trusted in the promises and protection of God.

"Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses. "From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory. "No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you."

God gave Joshua the promise, the protection, and the land so he could give it to the people.

Notice the importance of faith and action. Joshua was promised the land. At this point, the promise was specifically to Joshua and not even the entire people. So, we see the importance of leaders leading. God had determined to raise up a leader to lead His people. It was Moses for 40 years. But when he could not take them into the Promised Land, God raised up another leader.

The promises of God included *"Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given to you, just as I spoke to Moses."* It was contingent upon Joshua stepping onto the ground. Just like the water would not stop flowing in the Jordan until the priests stepped into the water, the land had already been given, but it was to be taken. God's promises have already been given, but they must be received or taken.

Joshua gave the people, through his leadership, what they would not have otherwise.

"Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them."

The blessing of God comes from different directions. Sometimes God speaks to us through His Word in the quietness of our devotional time. But here, the blessing of God was going to come by following the God-appointed leader into the place of promise with others. This was not a time for just Joshua or just one or two people to enjoy the promise. The entire group of people would enjoy the promise of God by following God's appointed leader.

It is important to understand God does not raise up a leader for the benefit of the leader. The leader serves the will of God and for the benefit of God's people.

Joshua's success was contingent on the Lord and his obedience and faith.

"Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. "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 success. "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

These are some of the most powerful and promising verses in all the Bible. We have prayed these words over our children, especially our sons.

It begins again with the admonition of being strong and courageous. This life in the Promised Land and life of obedience and life flowing with milk and honey and blessing is not an easy life. Only the strong and courageous will live in this land and live this kind of life. If the leader is not strong and courageous, how can the people, the followers, live in such a place?

Joshua must *"be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you."* Joshua must first be careful. He must pay attention and be committed to doing. He cannot become careless and think he can accomplish these things his own way or the way of the world. So many men think the rules are for everyone else except them. Men think they can always wing it. Men don't follow the directions. Most of the time, men don't even read the directions. While that is almost funny in some areas of life, in our spiritual life, there is only one way of success. It is God's way.

Men *"be careful"* to do what God says. Don't ignore it. Don't think it is not really that important. Don't neglect God's Word, His commands. Joshua was instructed to not turn from the left or the right. His success was contingent on these things.

Valiant Warriors must be careful and obey God to have success. A lack of success spiritually is easily traced to not obeying what God has clearly stated. By

disobeying God, we forfeit the promises of God.

Verse eight emphasizes what we discussed earlier about the importance of God's Word.

"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 success."

Here we see we are to speak the Word. The Word should not depart from your mouth. Jesus taught us that out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. Whatever we talk about is what we think about and what we are about. The Scripture teaches, *"As a man thinks in his heart, so is he"* (Proverbs 23:7).

A valiant warrior should meditate on the Word. This begins by thinking about it. It also includes personalizing the Word to our life. It includes praying through the Word asking God to apply it to our life.

An example of how to meditate upon the Word or a passage of Scripture is to read it frequently and think about how it applies to your life regularly. The Prayer of Jabez is a passage I meditate on regularly. It appears in my regular prayer list with the accompanying prayer to fix my mind in this direction when I frequent this prayer list. This is an edited view of what it looks like to me.

The Prayer of Jabez. 1 Chronicles 4:9-10.

*"Jabez was more honorable than his brothers, and his mother named him Jabez saying, "Because I bore him with pain." **Now Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, "Oh that You would bless me indeed and enlarge my border, and that Your hand might be with me, and that You would keep me from harm that it may not pain me!" And God granted him what he requested.***

Bless me indeed...with Your presence, with Your peace, with Your power, with perseverance according to Your promises

Enlarge my border...my capacity, my opportunities, my influence, my impact, my family, my fruitfulness

That Your hand might be with me...in my preaching, in my pastoring, in my leadership and decision making, in open doors

And that You would keep me from harm that it may not pain me...protect me from Satan, myself, the world, my enemies, from hurting others

And God granted him what he requested...Thank you for answering my prayers and promising to answer all prayer offered in Your Name according to Your will while abiding in Your Word and Your Word abiding in me.

God instructed Joshua to meditate on the law day and night. This reminds us of the admonition of the apostle Paul to the church at Thessalonica to pray without ceasing. People understandably ask, how do we do that? As we fill our minds with God's

Word and ask Him to help us obey this command, God will remind us throughout the day of what His Word says and how we can apply His Word to our situations. The Holy Spirit will cause us to think of His Word and will quicken our minds and our mouths to think and speak biblically. We must put the Word into our minds and hearts through reading and meditating and memorizing. We must ask the Holy Spirit to remind us throughout the day of His Word. Our minds are always thinking about something in the in-between times of the day. We have a lot of in-between times throughout every day. Our mind can be disciplined to think on those things that holy and spiritually beneficial through regularly meditating on the Word of God.

This meditation will result in obedience to God's Word. Obedience is the different side of the same coin that has faith on the other side. Faith and obedience go hand-in-hand. James said, "Faith without works is dead." Obedience is what we do. We are not saved by what we do, but rather by what Jesus did. But our faith leads to obedience. Albeit, our obedience is not flawless, but it is our desire and joy to obey the One we trust and have faith in.

Our success spiritually is guaranteed when we meditate on His Word and do His Word.

"...for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

Here we see the great promise of God's presence. Joshua is reminded to be strong and courageous because this life is difficult and the weak and fearful will not have success. Valiant warriors must not be fearful. The key to our strength and courage spiritually is the presence of God. This presence is a promise we see throughout Scripture. The greatest blessing God gives us is Himself. The greatest joy we have is being in the presence of God. The Psalmist tells us that "in Your presence is fullness of joy!" The fullest joy is not found in our recreation or jobs and not even in our families. The greatest and ultimate joy is found in God's presence. His presence will serve to give you strength and courage instead of weakness and fear.

Verses 10-15 tell us of Joshua assuming command and giving orders to the people. Verses 16-18 records the people's response.

Joshua was a leader the people followed.

"They answered Joshua, saying, 'All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. 'Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you; only may the LORD your God be with you as He was with Moses. 'Anyone who rebels against your command and does not obey your words in all that you command him, shall be put to death; only be strong and courageous.'"

Joshua was a man who had demonstrated consistency over time under Moses' tutelage. Joshua was a man of faith who obeyed the clear Word of God trusting in God's protection and plan. Joshua was a man who would meditate on the Word, obey the Word, and listen to the Word. This is the kind of man who is easy to follow.

They promised to follow Joshua like they followed Moses. They expected and prayed the Lord be with Joshua and that he would be strong and courageous.

What kind of man is easy to follow? Hard to follow?

Discuss the key characteristics of a good spiritual leader.

Discuss the tension in the fact no leader is perfect. How do we follow imperfect leaders?

How important is confession, honesty about mistakes, and humility in leadership?

What do you think it means and how important is it to be a "reluctant leader?"

session four

A STUDY OF JOSHUA
PREPARING FOR VICTORY

After being commissioned by God and Moses, Moses died. God reaffirmed Joshua and instructed him to lead the people into the Promised Land. The long-awaited promise was about to be fulfilled through Joshua's leadership. Due to the length of our study, chapters three, four, and five are combined under the heading of "Preparing for Victory." Many people are familiar with the story of the Jericho walls falling. These chapters prepare the people for that great victory.

Many commentators in past have spiritualized this book using the historical record of Joshua's conquest of the Promised Land as an allegory for living the promised or blessed life. I have great admiration for some these yesterday leaders like Alan Redpath from the historic Moody Church and A. W. Pink, the often-read reformed author from Britain who commonly "spiritualized" Old Testament passages, especially Joshua. I have also noticed the same leanings of reputable pastor scholar F. B. Meyer. We will attempt to honor the historical text with what God was doing in His promise to the nation of Israel. It is also important in redemption history to embrace the historical events of crossing the Jordan River and defeating the army of Jericho miraculously by the hand of God. But we do want to observe the timeless principles of faith, obedience, the hand of God, the warnings against fear, all kinds of sin, and the enemies opposing God's plan. The God Who delivered the children of Israel can deliver us. The God Who intervened miraculously for them can intervene for us. The God Who prepared them can prepare us. The God Who used them can use us. The God Who blessed them can bless us.

Before we jump into chapter three, we must briefly visit chapter two. Joshua repeated what Moses did in sending in spies prior to entering the Promised Land. The results and the report on this spy mission is radically different from the Numbers 13 and 14 mission and faithless majority report.

They could learn from the past, but they had to live and proceed into the future.

Joshua practiced conscientious due diligence in preparing to invade Canaan.

This is almost a déjà vu experience of sending spies across the Jordan on a reconnaissance mission. First, the spies needed and received help from an unlikely person. Rehab the harlot successfully helped and hid the spies from the King of Jericho who had heard there were spies in land. We notice how God was already working in the land of Canaan in the hearts of the Canaanites. God had imposed a spirit of fear in their hearts.

Rehab recognized this (2:9) by stating she knew the Lord had given their land into the hands of the Israelites. She also had seen the fear in the hearts of the Canaanites when it came to the Israelites. Rehab noted they had heard all God had done on behalf of the Israelites (2:10). Upon hearing what God had done, it caused the hearts of the Canaanites to melt (2:11). Rahab's help and her request merited her mercy when the Israelites invaded Jericho. A scarlet cord out the window the spies used to escape would mark Rahab's house and family that would

be spared during the invasion of Jericho. This scarlet cord is reminiscent of the blood over the doorpost to mark the homes that were to be passed over by the death angel prior to the exodus from Egypt. This scarlet cord is also anticipating the shed blood on the cross of Christ that would purchase and guarantee forgiveness of sin for all those who would believe.

Rahab's placing of the scarlet cord was an act of faith believing she and her family would be spared by the gracious act of the Israelites. In the same way, obedience has been and always will be indicative of faith. It is not obedience that obtains righteousness but rather it is faith. But obedience demonstrates the presence of faith in the promises and directives of God.

The report of this spy mission was *"surely the Lord has given all the land into our hands"* (2:24). The previous spy mission in Numbers has no record of the need of being hidden and narrow escapes from capture. It would appear if one group had more reason for questioning the success of the mission, it would have been this second group. What was the difference?

Obviously, this group had learned from the past mistakes of 40 years before. This group saw what Joshua and Caleb saw and what the other ten spies of the previous generation did not see. They saw the hand of God. They saw the land as God's promise. They saw their God as able to overcome the giants in the land and the challenges to the plan. They did not have to know all the details of how the battle would be won. They only needed to know God had made a way and would continue to give them success. At this point, God had promised Joshua He would guarantee Joshua's success.

God sent them into enemy territory (but it was the Promised Land).

God sent them where lost people were found. (Rahab)

God sent them where people would help them. (Rahab)

How does a leader's conscientious due diligence impact others, especially those who are following a leader into battle?

What was the difference between the first spy group of Numbers 13 and 14 and this spy group 40 years later?

Discuss the difference in faith and fear (both are motivators in behavior).

Discuss how God provides help along the way (sometimes from unusual places or people) when we are on mission with him. Do you have some illustrations from your own life of how God has raised up help for you just at the right time when you were on mission with God?

Now we are ready to see the crossing of the Jordan River. This was a real historical event. The instructions given and the actions taken are very important.

Read the story.

Joshua 3:1-5:15 (NASB95)

"Then Joshua rose early in the morning; and he and all the sons of Israel set out from Shittim and came to the Jordan, and they lodged there before they crossed. At the end of three days the officers went through the midst of the camp; and they commanded the people, saying, "When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God with the Levitical priests carrying it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it. "However, there shall be between you and it a distance of about 2,000 cubits by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you shall go, for you have not passed this way before." Then Joshua said to the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you." And Joshua spoke to the priests, saying, "Take up the ark of the covenant and cross over ahead of the people." So they took up the ark of the covenant and went ahead of the people. Now the Lord said to Joshua, "This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you. "You shall, moreover, command the priests who are carrying the ark of the covenant, saying, 'When you come to the edge of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan.' " Then Joshua said to the sons of Israel, "Come here, and hear the words of the Lord your God." Joshua said, "By this you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will assuredly dispossess from before you the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Hivite, the Perizzite, the Girgashite, the Amorite, and the Jebusite. "Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over ahead of you into the Jordan. "Now then, take for yourselves twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one man for each tribe. "It shall come about when the soles of the feet of the priests who carry the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan will be cut off, and the waters which are flowing down from above will stand in one heap." So when the people set out from their tents to cross the Jordan with the priests carrying the ark of the covenant before the people, and when those who carried the ark came into the Jordan, and the feet of the priests carrying the ark were dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks all the days of harvest), the waters which were flowing down from above stood and rose up in one heap, a great distance away at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan; and those which were flowing down toward the sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. So the people crossed opposite Jericho. And the priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan while all Israel crossed on dry ground, until all the nation had finished crossing the Jordan."

Joshua inspired others to join the journey to a better place.

Joshua 3:1-4

"Then Joshua rose early in the morning; and he and all the sons of Israel set out from Shittim and came to the Jordan, and they lodged there before they crossed. At the end of three days the officers went through the midst of the camp; and they commanded the people, saying, "When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God with the Levitical priests carrying it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it.

"However, there shall be between you and it a distance of about 2,000 cubits by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you shall go, for you have not passed this way before."

Joshua rose early in the morning. Many leaders throughout history have advocated for rising early. Jesus evidently was an early riser. It is early that many plan their day and hear from God and ask for God's blessing, direction, protection, and success for that day.

All the sons of Israel set out for Jordan. When they arrived, they waited three days. It is important to note the people were together in this endeavor. It would be understandable that not everyone had the same level of understanding, commitment, zeal, and enthusiasm. It was the movement of the whole that brought the stragglers and slow adopters along. Leaders bring others along on the journey. The leader sees the blessing and the benefits for the not completely convinced. The negative influence of the majority had kept everyone out of the Promised Land 40 years ago. The positive influence of these spies and now these leaders would usher in the Promised Land for everyone.

F. B. Meyer devoted an entire chapter, "Three Days' Pause," to the fact that they waited three days and speculated why and what they did. He pointed out the significance of three days throughout the Bible (i.e., Jonah is the fish, Jesus in the tomb). He suggested they needed to await the return and report of the spies.

Joshua could also assess the status of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh who would not occupy the Promised Land, but they were enlisted to fight for the Promised Land (1:12-16; Numbers 32:1-42; Deuteronomy 2:26-3:17). This is an interesting consideration of these two and a half tribes not living in the Promised Land. Pink, Redpath, and Meyer see the illustration of those who have tasted the Promised Land in battle or blessing and yet chosen to live outside the blessing of the Promised Land. It is true not everyone will cross over into the Promised Land (like Moses and all the warriors over 20 years old in Numbers 14). It is also true some who do cross over into the Promised Land will cross back over to the wilderness side of the Jordan.

Today, some are engaging in what is "deconstruction" of their faith. It really depends on who is defining the term as to the precise meaning. In general, some people are questioning everything about their faith. For some, this means they choose not to believe anything of what they use to embrace. The reasons for this questioning is varied and many. Certainly, many are blaming their experiences in churches as reasons for their "deconstruction." The experiences people have without question impact their perspective. It is not necessarily bad to question things with the goal of better understanding of what is true. So, it does matter where a person is on this path of deconstruction and what do they mean by that word.

But also, most, if not all, people have been hurt and offended by people in the church. As a matter of fact, some of the people who are deconstructing have hurt and offended many people in the church prior to their journey of deconstructing. Some deconstructionists are exercising one of the most common human nature tendencies and that is blame. We are all given to this propensity. But the call of God on valiant

warriors is to assume responsibility and make it better rather than blaming others and blowing up what God has ordained that is His church.

It is always right to look to Scripture. John taught "they went out from us because they were never of us" (1 John 2:19). This is not an excuse to live a reckless life disregarding our brothers in Christ in our actions. But this is the Scripture and the Word of God which explains to the remaining and warns the departing.

Discuss the real-life observations of people who once seemed to follow Christ but now are not following Him. Consider what some people are calling "deconstruction" of their faith.

Discuss the importance of making the spiritual journey with others. Obviously, some will not make the journey, but God's plan has always been that He brings a people into His kingdom and His mission.

Discuss the benefits and the joys of sharing the mission and ministry journey with others. Discuss the biblical precedent and foundation of people group mission, ministry, and movements.

The officers commanded the people to look for the ark, keep your distance, the ark will show you the way because you have not passed this way before. The ark of the covenant represents the presence of God. The greatest asset is always the presence of God. Without the presence of God, we are defeated. The children of Israel were willing to follow Joshua because they were convinced Joshua was following God. Joshua had trained and trusted his officers to lead the people to look for the presence of God. The people were going to a new place, a new land, where none of them had ever been. Not only had they not been at this location geographically, but they had not been to this place spiritually either. They needed to follow God.

How do people know how to follow God today?

Joshua communicated clearly the steps for success.

Joshua speaks to the people and then the priests telling them what to do. Some things the leader needs to say and the people need to hear the leader say it.

"Then Joshua said to the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you."

The people were to consecrate themselves. They were to be set apart for God's purposes and His use. Their greatest desire was to please and honor the Lord. They were to lay aside selfish ambition and vain conceit (Philippians 2:1-3).

They were preparing to cross the Jordan River, but they were also preparing to live in the Promised Land.

The Lord will do wonders among the people tomorrow. The promise was pertaining to what God would do more than what they would do. As we follow the Lord in His plans, we must realize God does not need us to do anything for Him. He is God

His mission allows us to see what God is doing. This experience in seeing the work and hand of God deeply enriches our walk with God and our understanding of Him.

As we go through life with our wife, we experience joys and heartbreaks. We experience the birth and adoption of children. We experience the joys and disappointments of raising children. We experience the heartbreak of infertility with our wife. We experience the loss of children, loss of jobs, loss of friends, and lots of loss. We experience mission trips and discipleship growth. After many years of these shared experiences, we are closer and grateful for this woman who we love and has stood beside us. In even a greater way, the ongoing shared experience of seeing the hand of God continues to grow us spiritually and expand our faith and accelerate our hope in Him.

What does it mean today to consecrate yourself? Why is that important? What is the result of not consecrating yourself?

Joshua communicated the importance of following the presence of God.

"And Joshua spoke to the priests, saying, "Take up the ark of the covenant and cross over ahead of the people." So they took up the ark of the covenant and went ahead of the people."

Joshua then spoke to the priests. The ark went ahead of the people. The presence of God should always be ahead of us. Not so far ahead that we cannot see Him, but ahead so we can follow Him.

"Now the Lord said to Joshua, "This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you. "You shall, moreover, command the priests who are carrying the ark of the covenant, saying, 'When you come to the edge of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan.' "

Then the Lord spoke to Joshua. God is the One who is going to do this work. The result would be the people would know the Lord is with Joshua like He had been with Moses.

Discuss what kind of leader people should listen to and follow. How can you tell if the Lord is "with" a leader? How can you tell if the Lord is not "with" a leader?

"Then Joshua said to the sons of Israel, "Come here, and hear the words of the Lord your God." Joshua said, "By this you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will assuredly dispossess from before you the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Hivite, the Perizzite, the Girgashite, the Amorite, and the Jebusite. "Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over ahead of you into the Jordan."

After getting the word from God, Joshua gave the word to the sons of Israel. Joshua requested the Hebrew people come here. Then Joshua gave credit to the Lord for these words. This lets the people know Joshua is under authority and this is from the Lord and not Joshua.

The key to the crossing was the ark of the covenant crossing over ahead of them.

Joshua told the people what to do and they did it. When the priests carrying the ark of the covenant stood in the Jordan River, the river stopped flowing and stood in a heap. The priests stood in the middle of the river while the people crossed over.

"Now then, take for yourselves twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one man for each tribe. "It shall come about when the soles of the feet of the priests who carry the ark of the Lord, the Lord of all the earth, rest in the waters of the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan will be cut off, and the waters which are flowing down from above will stand in one heap." So when the people set out from their tents to cross the Jordan with the priests carrying the ark of the covenant before the people, and when those who carried the ark came into the Jordan, and the feet of the priests carrying the ark were dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks all the days of harvest), the waters which were flowing down from above stood and rose up in one heap, a great distance away at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan; and those which were flowing down toward the sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. So the people crossed opposite Jericho. And the priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan while all Israel crossed on dry ground, until all the nation had finished crossing the Jordan."

Discuss the importance of faith in following God into a new place. Consider the connection of the Joshua 1 promise of everywhere Joshua placed his feet and the feet of the priests in 3:13,15. Discuss how past experiences (like a Red Sea parting) helps with new faith adventures like crossing a flooded Jordan River.

Discuss the importance or significance of verse 17 where the priests carrying the ark of the covenant 1) standing firm on dry ground, 2) in the middle of the Jordan, 3) while all Israel crossed on dry ground, until all the nation had finished crossing the Jordan.

Joshua Chapter 4

Chapter four is about sending representatives from each tribe of Israel back into the Jordan River while the priests still stood in the middle and the waters were held back. These representatives were to take stones from the Jordan River that would serve as a memorial to this day when the sons of Israel crossed the Jordan River on dry ground because of the hand of the Lord.

Read the story.

"Now when all the nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the Lord spoke to Joshua, saying, "Take for yourselves twelve men from the people, one man from each tribe, and command them, saying, 'Take up for yourselves twelve stones from here out of the middle of the Jordan, from the place where the priests' feet are standing firm, and carry them over with you and lay them down in the lodging place where you will lodge tonight.'" So Joshua called the twelve men whom he had appointed from the sons of Israel, one man from each tribe; and Joshua said to them, "Cross again to the ark of the Lord your God into the middle of the Jordan, and each of you take up a stone on his shoulder, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Israel. "Let this be a sign among you, so that when your children ask later, saying, 'What do these stones mean to you?' then you shall say to them, 'Because the waters of the Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord; when it crossed the Jordan, the waters of the Jordan were cut off.' So these stones shall become a memorial to the sons of Israel forever." Thus the sons of Israel did as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones from the middle of the Jordan, just as the Lord spoke to Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Israel; and they carried them over with them to the lodging place and put them down there. Then Joshua set up twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan at the place where the feet of the priests who carried the ark of the covenant were standing, and they are there to this day. For the priests who carried the ark were standing in the middle of the Jordan until everything was completed that the Lord had commanded Joshua to speak to the people, according to all that Moses had commanded Joshua. And the people hurried and crossed; and when all the people had finished crossing, the ark of the Lord and the priests crossed before the people. The sons of Reuben and the sons of Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh crossed over in battle array before the sons of Israel, just as Moses had spoken to them; about 40,000 equipped for war, crossed for battle before the Lord to the desert plains of Jericho. On that day the Lord exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; so that they revered him, just as they had revered Moses all the days of his life. Now the Lord said to Joshua, "Command the priests who carry the ark of the testimony that they come up from the Jordan." So Joshua commanded the priests, saying, "Come up from the Jordan." It came about when the priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord had come up from the middle of the Jordan, and the soles of the priests' feet were lifted up to the dry ground, that the waters of the Jordan returned to their place, and went over all its banks as before. Now the people came up from the Jordan on the tenth of the first month and camped at Gilgal on the eastern edge of Jericho. Those twelve stones which they had taken from the Jordan, Joshua set up at Gilgal. He said to the sons of Israel, "When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, 'What are these stones?' then you shall inform your children, saying, 'Israel crossed this Jordan on dry ground.'" "For the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed, just as the Lord your God had done to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed; that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty, so that you may fear the Lord your God forever."

Joshua listened to the Lord in creating memorial opportunities for generations to come.

Joshua had benefited from the mentoring relationship with Moses. The major focus of Moses' ministry and leadership was to bring the people into the Promised Land. The deliverance for Egyptian bondage, the crossing the Red Sea, the pillar of cloud by day, the pillar of fire by night, the manna in the wilderness, the military battles, and more were for the Promised Land. Joshua was now looking back on what they had been looking ahead to. Under God's leadership, he is creating a memorial to remind the subsequent generations of this day of the river crossing.

These stones were set up in Gilgal as a memorial.

The sons of Israel were repeatedly told to do things. They were to be circumcised. They were to cross the Jordan River. They were to take stones out of the river and build a memorial. None of this was explained. It was commanded. The people were probably thinking, "We need to build a bridge across the river instead of building a memorial."

"For the Lord your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed, just as the Lord your God had done to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed; that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the Lord is mighty, so that you may fear the Lord your God forever."

Discuss the content of verse 23 of what God had done.

Discuss the purpose of the memorial in verse 24.

Consider how God requires and blesses immediate obedience to commands that have no explanation.

Consider how the Lord's Supper commemorates and serves as a teaching experience for subsequent generations.

Consider how you can commemorate significant events in the life of your family, your Valiant Warrior group, or other mentoring or discipleship group.

Consider manhood ceremonies for your sons upon graduation from high school, college, or upon marriage. What should these ceremonies include and accomplish?

Joshua 5

"Now it came about when 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 how the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan before the sons of Israel until they had crossed, that their hearts melted, and there was no spirit in them any longer because of the sons of Israel. At that time the Lord said to Joshua, "Make for yourself flint knives and circumcise again the sons of Israel the second time." So Joshua made himself flint knives and circumcised the sons of Israel at Gibeath-haaraloth. This is the reason why Joshua circumcised them: all the people who came out of Egypt who were males, all the men of war, died in the wilderness along the way after they came out of Egypt. For all the people who came out were circumcised, but all the people who were born in the wilderness along the way as they came out of Egypt had not been circumcised. For the sons of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, until all the nation, that is, the men of war who came out of Egypt, perished because they did not listen to the voice of the Lord, to whom the Lord had sworn that He would not let them see the land which the Lord had sworn to their fathers to give us, a land flowing with milk and honey. Their children whom He raised up in their place, Joshua circumcised; for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them along the way. Now when they had finished circumcising all the nation, they remained in their places in the camp until they were healed. Then the Lord said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you." So the name of that place is called Gilgal to this day. While the sons of Israel camped at Gilgal they observed the Passover on the evening of the fourteenth day of the month on the desert plains of Jericho. On the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. The manna ceased on the day after they had eaten some of the produce of the land, so that the sons of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate some of the yield of the land of Canaan during that year. Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand, and Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us or for our adversaries?" He said, "No; rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the Lord." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, "What has my lord to say to his servant?" The captain of the Lord's host said to Joshua, "Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so."

Joshua lived on the promises and providential hand of God.

"Now it came about when 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 how the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan before the sons of Israel until they had crossed, that their hearts melted, and there was no spirit in them any longer because of the sons of Israel."

God was defeating His enemies before the battle began. God was putting fear in the hearts of the kings of Canaan. The hearts of the people were melting. These people would have no appetite for fighting by the time battle would begin. We are totally dependent on God's hand winning the battle before us. Our God is

a victorious Warrior who goes before His people. Valiant warriors do not fight for victory but rather fight from a position of victory. God has already won the victory. Jesus has conquered His foes and our foe.

Joshua was living on the promises and providential hand of God.

You need to trust in the promises of God. You need to trust in the providential hand of God working behind the scenes, orchestrating history, intervening intentionally with His kind intentions toward you. He has already given you every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. He has given you everything pertaining to life and godliness in Christ Jesus.

Live victoriously knowing God goes before you on your behalf as He did with Joshua.

Discuss ways God has gone before you and goes before you today in ways that may not be so obvious immediately.

Discuss the impact of the enemies of God being afraid with melted hearts going into battle. Give some examples of where you have seen this in military battles, sporting events, and other places. Give some examples where confidence, assurance, and momentum carried what appeared to be a lesser opponent to victory.

Joshua led the people to spiritual preparation before battle.

God calls Joshua to prepare the people spiritually before conquest would begin. This preparation included circumcision. Verse four tells us those born in the wilderness wandering had not been circumcised. The men of war had all died in the wilderness because they were not allowed to pass into the Promised Land due to their lack of faith in Numbers 13 and 14. So, these are the children of those men of war who feared the giants in Canaan with the exception of Joshua and Caleb.

The timing of this circumcision was not great from a human perspective. They were now in enemy territory. While the biblical text tells us the hearts of their enemies' kings had melted, we do not know if they knew that. Also, while these adult men were recovering from a painful circumcision, it would be a great time to attack. So, this preparation put them in a vulnerable position. The natural inclination once in enemy territory is to forego anymore preparation and just get to fighting. It is important to realize chapter five is the spiritual preparation necessary to win the spiritual victory.

"At that time the Lord said to Joshua, "Make for yourself flint knives and circumcise again the sons of Israel the second time." So Joshua made himself flint knives and circumcised the sons of Israel at Gibeath-haaraloth. This is the reason why Joshua circumcised them: all the people who came out of Egypt who were males, all the men of war, died in the wilderness along the way after they came out of Egypt. For all the people who came out were circumcised, but all the people who were born in

the wilderness along the way as they came out of Egypt had not been circumcised. For the sons of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, until all the nation, that is, the men of war who came out of Egypt, perished because they did not listen to the voice of the Lord, to whom the Lord had sworn that He would not let them see the land which the Lord had sworn to their fathers to give us, a land flowing with milk and honey. Their children whom He raised up in their place, Joshua circumcised; for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them along the way. Now when they had finished circumcising all the nation, they remained in their places in the camp until they were healed."

Discuss the importance of preparation in military battle, sports, and other areas of life.

Can you think of any unusual preparations that were highly effective looking back?

Read 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 and discuss the unconventional preparations and methods of battle God prescribes.

Discuss "the reason why" (verse four) Joshua circumcised the sons of Israel. Consider the purpose of circumcision in Genesis 17:10-14.

Joshua had a special place of preparation.

Gilgal was a special place. Gilgal means "rolling" closely connected in verse nine to "Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you." A. W. Pink (*Gleanings in Joshua*, p. 125) teaches this reproach had gone on these years as the children of Israel had wandered outside the Promised Land. The people had left Egypt for the Promised Land, but it appeared to the Egyptians they left Egypt to die in the wilderness; thus, reproach and the sneer of Egypt was what the Lord "rolled away" meaning Gilgal.

This place would serve as the base of operations for the battles against the Canaanites. It would be the place Joshua would frequently return to. It was the place where the women and children most likely were while the men, the valiant warriors, went out to battle.

The memorial stones from the Jordan River were there. So, Gilgal is a place of remembrance.

It is the place where the people came up out of the Jordan River. So, Gilgal is a place of resurrection (Alan Redpath, 70).

It is the place of the circumcision preparing them spiritually for conquest of and in Canaan.

It is the place where the Lord takes away the reproach of Egypt.

It is the place of the first Passover in the Promised Land.

It is the place where they first eat the produce of the land.

It is the place where the manna ceased to fall.

In the next section, we will see it is the place of holy ground. It is a place of revelation (Redpath, 95).

"Then the Lord said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you." So the name of that place is called Gilgal to this day. While the sons of Israel camped at Gilgal they observed the Passover on the evening of the fourteenth day of the month on the desert plains of Jericho. On the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. The manna ceased on the day after they had eaten some of the produce of the land, so that the sons of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate some of the yield of the land of Canaan during that year."

Discuss the importance of the place Gilgal considering all the "firsts" of this place.

What places have been special in your spiritual life? Why are those places special?

Discuss ways we can create special places for spiritual renewal, revival, and awakening.

Consider how Gilgal was like boot camp spiritually in preparing Israel for battle.

Discuss the tension between God having promised the land and the victory, and the necessity for them to fight for and prepare to fight for the land.

The reality is some aspects of the battle will be all God (Jericho walls) and some will require fierce fighting (Ai).

Joshua had a holy encounter on holy ground with a Holy God.

Verses 13-15 are some of the high-water verses of Scripture. Many, including me, believe Joshua encountered the pre-incarnate Christ just outside Jericho. This is what is called a Christophany. It is the pre-incarnate meaning before the incarnation appearance of Jesus Christ. Many believe Melchizedek in Genesis was a Christophany.

This was, without question, the most important step of preparation for Joshua.

Joshua lifted his eyes and looked and beheld a man. He was aware of what was going on around him. He had a lot going on with circumcision, Passover, feasting on the food of the Promised Land, adjusting to no more manna, and considering the invasion ahead.

Joshua saw a man with a sword drawn.

Joshua went up to this man and inquired of him. This took courage and bravery, which Joshua possessed. Passive men do not ask questions or approach uncertain situations. Passive men certainly don't approach unknown men with a drawn sword.

Joshua asked an important question.

His question was a common sense question. "Are you for us or for our adversaries?" That is a simple question. The guy could have lied even if he was the enemy. But the man with the drawn sword did not answer Joshua's question in that way.

Joshua learned an important lesson.

The man said, "No." He was not for the adversary nor was He on Joshua's side. He identified Himself as captain of the host of the Lord. The host of the Lord is the Lord Himself. He is the commander of the Lord's army. Joshua understood Who he was talking to at that moment. He did not debate the man and ask for credentials to prove Who He was. Joshua knew the Lord. Joshua walked with the Lord. Joshua had just gotten through talking to the the Lord to get the instructions up to this point.

Joshua submitted to the Lord.

He fell to the ground in submission. He bowed down in submission. Joshua had lived a life of submission to the Lord. He had learned submission to the Lord. He was standing where he was on that day because of his submission to the Lord. He asked, "What do you have to say to me in submission?" The captain of the Lord's host told him to remove his sandals because "where you are standing is holy." This place was a holy place because the Lord was there.

Joshua was engaged in spiritual warfare and needed a spiritual war captain fighting before him. The Canaanites were not an innocent group of people who a superior group were about to displace. The Canaanites were a wicked people. They practiced the most gross sexual immorality imaginable. They worshiped false gods and engaged in demonic activity. They were ruthless warriors with no regard for any kind of morality or value of life or dignity of life. They were pawns in the hands of Satan occupying the land God had set aside for His people. This land is not a large section of land.

This spiritual captain of the host of the Lord was there to defeat the powers of darkness and demons that had a stronghold over this territory that belonged to the Lord and His people. We are reminded the weapons of our warfare are spiritual. We wrestle not against flesh and blood. We are fighting principalities and powers in high places in dark places. This spiritual battle is against demons, doctrines of demons, and Satan himself. Satan is a defeated foe, but he is a foe. His demonic representatives were occupying the land God had promised for His people. The land had to be occupied by steps of faith—real steps of faith not imaginary steps. This powerful, visible, real-life encounter served to remind Joshua of the nature of

this battle and purpose behind this battle.

The children of Israel had demonstrated their avoidance of difficulty, suffering, and battle when it comes to claiming their spiritual blessings. They were quick to whine and be willing to return to Egypt rather than battle for their promised future. It is important to always remember the only reason good enough to engage in the battle is that it is the Lord's battle. And He goes before His people. And He is the One who fights the battle. He is on the scene at Gilgal to ensure the defeat of the demonic forces and powers behind the evil Canaanites that were occupying the land of God's people.

"Now it came about when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing opposite him with his sword drawn in his hand, and Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us or for our adversaries?" He said, "No; rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the Lord." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, "What has my lord to say to his servant?" The captain of the Lord's host said to Joshua, "Remove your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so."

What can we learn from Joshua's awareness of the man with the sword?

What can we learn from Joshua's question of the man with the sword?

Discuss who this man with sword is.

Discuss the response of the man with the sword in verse 14.

What makes a place holy?

What is the significance of removing one's shoes?

Discuss Joshua's attitude toward this encounter.

What could be the significance of the captain of the host of the Lord being present with His sword drawn at the gate of Jericho?

Discuss spiritual warfare in today's world.

session five

A STUDY OF JOSHUA
WALKING IN VICTORY

The most well-known event in Joshua's life for most people is the walls of Jericho story. I even remember in a public school choir class being taught a song about this biblical story where "the walls came 'a tumblin' down." It was certainly a miraculous feat that resulted in victory for the sons of Israel. But this also fits into the plan of God for His people to occupy the Promised Land.

Valiant warriors should be prepared for battle and ready to step into battle. Preparation always is very important for success in military conflict or athletic competition. Joshua had been preparing a lifetime for this battle. He had participated in and led men into battle. He had witnessed the greatest leader of his day and maybe of all time, in Moses. This study will highlight God's methods for victory are not always the most obvious or conventional.

After a lifetime of seeing the hand of God work mightily on behalf of his people, Joshua was looking and listening again for the word of God and His direction.

Verse one paints a challenging and almost conflicting picture.

"Now Jericho was tightly shut because of the sons of Israel; no one went out and no one came in."

Jericho was tightly shut meaning the residents were afraid of coming out because their hearts were melted concerning the sons of Israel. But their unwillingness to come and go would also make it difficult to conquer them as they assumed the strategy of just hunkering down, not exposing themselves to out in the open enemy attack.

Verse two continues the faith walk for Joshua when he is told to "see" what had not yet happened. Jericho was not in his hands yet, although the Lord was telling him to see it. The imperative mood carries the force of a command for him to see what had not yet been accomplished. This is the key to walking in victory. That is faith. Joshua understood the promise of God and the plan of God. He expected God to fulfill His promises, His plans, and accomplish His purpose. He was looking for God to do so.

God gave Joshua a fuller revelation for a greater task in the previous chapter as he met the captain of the Lord's host.

Joshua received God's promise for victory.

"Now Jericho was tightly shut because of the sons of Israel; no one went out and no one came in. The LORD said to Joshua, 'See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and the valiant warriors.'"

This verse sets the stage for the episode at Jericho and is grammatically and syntactically not part of the narrative story line. The problem is stated: Jericho was "tightly shut up." This would appear to have been a dual problem. It was a problem for the inhabitants of Jericho, since it was "because of the Israelites" this happened, but it also was a problem for the Israelites since their task of taking the city was made all that much harder because of this. The difficulty of the task magnified the great accomplishment of the taking of the city when it did take place. In

this sense, verse one functions in the same way 3:15 does, which precedes the other great miracle in the book ("Now the Jordan overflows all its banks all the days of the harvest"). Both show a great potential obstacle that is then overcome effortlessly by a mighty act of God.

A) God asked him to see the invisible.

He asked him to "see" Jericho in his hands, while looking at the thick high walls with no one surrendering yet. Hebrews 11:30 states, "By faith, the walls fell down..."

B) God asked him to do the impossible.

It was not in Joshua's ability to penetrate those thick walls and overcome the fierce valiant warriors of Jericho. It was impossible for man, but with God all things are possible.

C) God asked him to do the important.

The first thing he was to do was the most important. After Jericho fell, the other cities would fall. We do not have time to waste on the less than important stuff.

Discuss some of the promises of God you must "see" before you experience. Read Hebrews 11:1, 6, 30 and discuss these verses.

Joshua received God's plan for victory.

A) God called for unconventional methods.

"You shall march around the city, all the men of war circling the city once. You shall do so for six days. "Also seven priests shall carry seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark; then on the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets."

Their battle was spiritual in nature, so the weapons and actions were those of faith and not sight.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ."

This idea was set up by the Joshua 5:13-15 episode with the captain of the Lord of hosts.

The ritual nature is suggested by the prevalence of the number "seven," which occurs four times in verse four alone and 14 times in the chapter. "Seven" is the number of totality, completion, and perfection in the Scriptures; and its predominance in this chapter emphasizes the completeness of Yahweh's victory on Israel's behalf. This spiritual exercise is a natural outgrowth of the rituals of holiness in chapter five, since Jericho was dedicated to destruction for Yahweh, that is, it was "set apart" to him, as were all things holy (see verse 17).

The outcome of the entire affair is announced to Joshua at the outset: God had

⁴Howard, D. M., Jr. (1998). Joshua (Vol. 5, pp. 168–169).
Broadman & Holman Publishers.

already given Jericho, its king, and its warriors into Joshua's hand (verse 2). Thus, the extensive marching, blowing of trumpets, and shouting the Israelites were to engage in is shown to be essentially ceremonial because God was giving the victory. This is reinforced by the comment at the end of verse 5, where God stated clearly the wall would collapse through no effort on the people's part beyond the ceremonial actions just mentioned.

B) God called for uncompromising commitment.

"It shall be that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout."

They put their lives and reputation and the reputation of God on the line. They became vulnerable doing what they had never done before with no guarantee of success except for the word of the Lord. They were vulnerable to attack and ridicule. Abandoned to the will of God over the wisdom of man is the most secure place a person can be.

C) God promised an undeniable conclusion.

"and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people will go up every man straight ahead."

God will perform a miracle undeniable by anyone. The promise of the wall falling was clear and outside the capacity of any one soldier or army. Jericho was the most fortified city. It is the idea of fighting the toughest guy in the neighborhood first to get it over with and set the tone for the future.

Joshua pursued God's plan for victory. 6-26

A) Joshua communicated God's plan for victory. 6-14

The first command was to "take up the ark of the covenant." The ark would be prominent in circling the city as it was prominent in crossing the Jordan River. The ark represents the presence of the Lord. This is His battle and He would lead them into battle.

"So Joshua the son of Nun called the priests and said to them, 'Take up the ark of the covenant, and let seven priests carry seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark of the LORD.' Then he said to the people, 'Go forward, and march around the city, and let the armed men go on before the ark of the LORD.' And it was so, that when Joshua had spoken to the people, the seven priests carrying the seven trumpets of rams' horns before the LORD went forward and blew the trumpets; and the ark of the covenant of the LORD followed them. The armed men went before the priests who blew the trumpets, and the rear guard came after the ark, while they continued to blow the trumpets. But Joshua commanded the people, saying, 'You shall not shout nor let your voice be heard nor let a word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I tell you, 'Shout!' Then you shall shout!'" So he had the ark of the LORD taken around the city, circling it once; then they came into the camp and spent the night in the camp. Now Joshua rose early in the morning, and the priests took up the ark of the LORD. The seven priests carrying the seven trumpets of rams'

horns before the ark of the LORD went on continually, and blew the trumpets; and the armed men went before them and the rear guard came after the ark of the LORD, while they continued to blow the trumpets. Thus the second day they marched around the city once and returned to the camp; they did so for six days."

A key to effective leadership is great communication. Joshua could not delegate this speech. The people wanted and needed to hear from him. Many people consider Ronald Reagan possibly the best president in our lifetime. I personally would hold to that view for multiple reasons. One reason is he received all the electoral votes except for the home state of his opponent. I'm going out on a limb in saying that will never happen again. Reagan was known as the "great communicator." He could and would go on television or radio and take his case directly to the people. His speeches were inspiring and captivating. Joshua was engaged in effective communication.

Joshua's communication called for less verbal communication on the part of the sons of Israel. Notice the command to not speak or shout in verse 10. The author of Ecclesiastes wrote, "Let your words be few."

We often overestimate our gift of persuasion and underestimate our gift of prayer.

We are guilty of talking too much, praying too little, and accomplishing even less.

The futility of those who oppose God is exposed. A wall that takes years and great amounts of wealth and effort to build is destroyed with a shout from God's people.

It will be seen that more time is spent in preparation for victory than the momentary ease of the walls falling down.

Discuss the importance of effective communication. Give examples of good communication and poor communication.

Joshua executed God's plan for victory. 15-21

A) They submitted to the plans of God.

"Then on the seventh day they rose early at the dawning of the day and marched around the city in the same manner seven times; only on that day they marched around the city seven times. At the seventh time, when the priests blew the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, "Shout! For the LORD has given you the city."

They did precisely what God had said through Joshua for them to do to experience victory. The Qal perfect tense communicates a past action with ongoing results in has given you the city. The city had already been given to them. They just needed to take it by faith. This has been the common promise to Joshua (1:3; 6:2) which requires the complete obedience to God's instruction. They did not modify God's instructions. They did not make a cultural adjustment since times and places were changing.

What are some ways people and churches today are not submitting to the clear teaching of Scripture and thus are making it up as they go? Where is compromise wise and where is compromise foolish or ungodly?

B) They sanctified themselves from the things under the ban.

"The city shall be under the ban, it and all that is in it belongs to the LORD; only Rahab the harlot and all who are with her in the house shall live, because she hid the messengers whom we sent. "But as for you, only keep yourselves from the things under the ban, so that you do not covet them and take some of the things under the ban, and make the camp of Israel accursed and bring trouble on it. "But all the silver and gold and articles of bronze and iron are holy to the LORD; they shall go into the treasury of the LORD."

We have seen where the sons of Israel were to be "sanctified" or command to consecrate themselves. This consecration was a setting apart their lives for the purpose of God's service and His glory. Since they were set apart for God's purposes, they were prohibited and protected from certain things and practices.

Things "devoted to the LORD" were off limits to the Israelites because they were to be completely destroyed as an offering of sorts to the Lord. Verse 18 gives further details: "But keep away from the devoted things [*hērem*], so that you will not bring about your own destruction [*hāram*] by taking any of [the devoted things (*hērem*)]. Otherwise you will make the camp of Israel liable to destruction [*hērem*] and bring trouble on it." Certain items were to be set apart for destruction, and if they were not, Israel itself would be subject to the same fate; Israel itself would become "a devoted thing." Verse 19 continues to develop this idea. The treasures of Jericho were to be set apart for the Lord, since they were sacred, that is, holy. As such, they were to go into his treasury. The term here for "treasury" (*'ōsar*) is the same one used for those in Solomon's temple, built many years later (1 Kgs 7:51). However, since no temple stood in Joshua's day, the exact nature and location of this treasury is unknown. The "treasury of the LORD'S house" is mentioned in verse 24; it may have been associated with the "house of God" at Gilgal mentioned in 9:23. The sacred tent at Shiloh in Samuel's day was also called "the house of the LORD" (1 Sam 1:7). There is no need to suppose this referred, anachronistically, to the later temple. In Ps 27:4, 6, the words "house of the LORD" and "his tabernacle" are used interchangeably, and the references here in Joshua may have been to the tabernacle as the Lord's house, not the temple.

What things would be comparable today to the "things under the ban" in NASB or "devoted to the Lord" that would be destroyed? Why would God put certain things "under the ban?"

C) They shouted and the walls fell.

"So the people shouted, and priests blew the trumpets; and when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted with a great shout and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight ahead, and they took the city. They utterly destroyed everything in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox and sheep and donkey, with the edge of the sword."

The great miracle of the walls collapsing is told here in one terse statement at the end of verse 20. However, this fits the general outlook of the book, that military matters belonged to God and he would effortlessly fight Israel's battles.

The book of Hebrews adds to this perspective: it was "by faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the people had marched around them for seven days" (Heb 11:30).

Joshua remembered and rescued Rahab.

"Joshua said to the two men who had spied out the land, "Go into the harlot's house and bring the woman and all she has out of there, as you have sworn to her." So the young men who were spies went in and brought out Rahab and her father and her mother and her brothers and all she had; they also brought out all her relatives and placed them outside the camp of Israel. They burned the city with fire, and all that was in it. Only the silver and gold, and articles of bronze and iron, they put into the treasury of the house of the LORD. However, Rahab the harlot and her father's household and all she had, Joshua spared; and she has lived in the midst of Israel to this day, for she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho."

Here we see the Great Commission in Joshua. Along the way fulfilling the plan of God, their paths sovereignly collided with Rahab the Harlot. She was a woman of the world who made her living in the most ungodly way. She was one of the Jericho residents whose hearts had melted with fear of the sons of Israel. In her desperation, she cried out and cut a deal with the Israelite spies. Joshua was still fulfilling God's promise. God had promised this land. Joshua was moving into that land. God was also populating heaven from every tribe and nation. So, God rescued Rahab and used Joshua and his men to do it.

However, the point of the verse is not to date the writing of the book, but rather to indicate something of the lasting effects of the agreement the two spies had made with Rahab. It was a binding agreement, one Israel honored, because of Rahab's faith.

Rahab would be included in the ancestor list in Matthew 1:5. Boaz had Rahab as his mother. No wonder Boaz was open to taking Ruth the Moabite as his wife who became the great-great grandmother of King David.

Valiant warriors value all people of all races and nations. The Lord Jesus has the Jericho harlot and the Moabite widow listed in His family tree. Obviously, Salmon took Rahab as his wife and later Boaz would take Ruth as his wife. They both would be violating a practice among the Jews of marrying only Jewish brides.

Discuss and connect the Promised Land and the Great Commission in the New Testament and Old Testament alike. How does fulfilling the promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3 anticipate and participate in the Great Commission Matthew 28:19-20?

Joshua led them to promise to never rebuild Jericho.

"Then Joshua made them take an oath at that time, saying, "Cursed before the LORD is the man who rises up and builds this city Jericho; with the loss of his firstborn he shall lay its foundation, and with the loss of his youngest son he shall set up its gates."

Joshua pronounced a curse against anyone who would rebuild the city of Jericho. This echoed Moses' instructions in Deuteronomy 13:12–16 (Hb. 13–17) that the Israelites should completely destroy any city in which wicked men arose to lead people astray by worshiping other gods. Many years later, this curse found a fulfillment when Hiel, a man from Bethel, "rebuilt Jericho. He laid its foundations at the cost of his firstborn son Abiram, and he set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub, in accordance with the word of the LORD spoken by Joshua son of Nun" (1 Kgs 16:34). The key words of the curse are found in both texts, showing the strict faithfulness of the Lord to his own words or those legitimately spoken on his behalf. The city was used as a place of habitation on occasion (see Josh 18:21; Judg 3:13; 2 Sam 10:5), but Hiel's actions represented the first time someone had actually attempted to rebuild the city in a systematic way, restoring its foundations and its gates, in violation of the curse.

Joshua walked in Lord's victory and fame.

"So the LORD was with Joshua, and his fame was in all the land."

Discuss why the greatest blessing for Christ followers is His presence, "So the LORD was with Joshua."

What are the three greatest lessons you have learned from this study of Joshua?

What actions are you taking in your spiritual journey because of this Valiant Warrior study of Joshua?

How can you be a mentor like Moses was to Joshua?

session six

A STUDY OF JOSHUA
THE SETBACK OF SECRET SIN

Our last lesson moves from victory to defeat then to avenge the defeat. Joshua and the sons of Israel had just experienced their greatest victory on their way to taking the land God had promised to them. Chapter seven is duly noted as the sin of Achan or the defeat at Ai.

Valiant warriors should know one victory does not guarantee the next victory. Every battle has its own preparations and unique challenges. Besides, the sons of Israel did not display any real military prowess in the victory. They simply enjoyed the mighty hand of God in their favor.

Remember in last week's lesson the discussion on things under the ban. We will see in this lesson partial obedience is disobedience. We will also see there are severe consequences to disobeying God. Those consequences not only impact the perpetrators but also those associated with them. The collateral damage to sin is real and impactful.

While Joshua did not commit this sin himself, he was the leader. He had to sort through the sin. He experienced consequences to his leadership because Achan did not obey the Lord.

Immediately on the outside, it appeared everything was alright. God had sovereignly performed a miracle in causing the Jericho walls to fall down. Undetected by the physical eye was the secret sin and hidden sin. Hidden sin is often subtle but diabolical. It is like a hidden cancer that does not seem so bad at first, but if left untreated will ultimately kill you.

Secret sin that is not immediately detected leads to a false sense of security. The perpetrators often think they got away with it. Sometimes they feel it was not really that bad. In this case, they would immediately think there were no real victims in this offense. The inhabitants of Jericho were all killed. They did not need this stuff. It would be a shame to destroy something that could be useful or admired or serve as a spoil of victory.

Secret sin is deceptive in the fact it is a secret. But it is also deceptive to the perpetrator misleading them to justification or that they got away with it. People underestimate the collateral impact of secret sin on those around them. It demonstrates a blindness to the spiritual nature of our lives as valiant warriors. What God knows about us and the work He does in us is the most important thing to the valiant warrior.

Secret and hidden sin demonstrates the total depravity of sin. The fact it is a secret or hidden sin communicates it is understood this is wrong. Thus, it is hidden. But the commission of something that a person knows is wrong convicts us as guilty and in the grip of sin. The only ultimate solution is salvation by grace through Jesus Christ.

As you read and discuss these two chapters, consider the fact God did give them victory over Jericho while Achan was stealing and disobeying God. The items he stole were from Jericho. So, the sons of Israel had victory during the commission of the secret sin. But, they experienced defeat in the next battle.

Secret sin is no secret to God.

"But the sons of Israel acted unfaithfully in regard to the things under the ban, for Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, from the tribe of Judah, took some of the things under the ban, therefore the anger of the LORD burned against the sons of Israel."

Immediately in the biblical text, verse one clearly states who and what constituted "But the sons of Israel acted unfaithfully in regard to the things under the ban." The last lesson we noted the "things under the ban" were items that were "devoted to the Lord." In essence they were stealing from God in their disobedience. Clearly, the anger of the Lord was against the sons of Israel. No one knew of the sin except the one who committed it. Achan was from the prominent tribe of Judah. More was expected of Achan than what he did. The reason for their upcoming defeat lays squarely at the feet of Achan.

Discuss the struggle of secret sin, especially among men. Consider pride, embarrassment, and misunderstanding of the grace of God and the gospel of Christ in contributing to hidden sin.

Joshua continued to lead the people to realize God's promise.

"Now Joshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is near Beth-aven, east of Bethel, and said to them, "Go up and spy out the land." So the men went up and spied out Ai."

Joshua, unaware of Achan's sin, proceeded to lead the sons of Israel into their next battle. Expectations were high with the Jericho success. He used a similar formula of sending spies into the land of Ai prior to attacking. The mission never changed.

Joshua listened to the spies who gave the wrong advice.

"They returned to Joshua and said to him, "Do not let all the people go up; only about two or three thousand men need go up to Ai; do not make all the people toil up there, for they are few." So about three thousand men from the people went up there..."

It appears the spies underestimated what was needed for success. Spies have brought back reports rooted in fear (Numbers 14), but here, it appears the spies are rooted in pride. Only 2,000-3,000 men were suggested. Looking ahead into chapter eight, we see on the successful conquering of Ai, ten times that number of 30,000 were used to avenge the impending defeat.

These soldiers probably presumed upon the grace of God to give them victory. They most likely overestimated their military skill and the basis of their past successes. They never considered the possibility there might be sin in the camp. They were overconfident and not walking in humble dependence upon the grace of God. Their lack of concern or consideration of any possibility of sin in the camp demonstrates their insensitivity to spiritual matters. Their pride, overconfidence, and presumption contributed or was evidence of their impending defeat.

Discuss the problems of pride and self-confidence and over-confidence in the lives of men.

How do these things get us in trouble?

How can we avoid these pitfalls?

The sons of Israel were defeated at Ai.

"...but they fled from the men of Ai. The men of Ai struck down about thirty-six of their men, and pursued them from the gate as far as Shebarim and struck them down on the descent, so the hearts of the people melted and became as water."

The sons of Israel became like the Canaanites. Their hearts melted. They retreated. They suffered significant loss of life. They went from victory to defeat. They were the people that all in the land feared. Now they were defeated by the army of Ai.

Consider how many men are living life like the aftermath of Ai in defeat.

How can you engage men who feel like failures with no hope for a better life?

Joshua deeply grieved the loss.

"Then Joshua tore his clothes and fell to the earth on his face before the ark of the LORD until the evening, both he and the elders of Israel; and they put dust on their heads. Joshua said, 'Alas, O Lord GOD, why did You ever bring this people over the Jordan, only to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us? If only we had been willing to dwell beyond the Jordan! 'O Lord, what can I say since Israel has turned their back before their enemies? 'For the Canaanites and all the inhabitants of the land will hear of it, and they will surround us and cut off our name from the earth. And what will You do for Your great name?'"

Joshua grieved the loss of life and the loss to an enemy army. He took the loss personally. He was shamed and without words since "Israel has turned their backs before their enemies." Thirty-six men had lost their lives, but the rest turned their back to the enemy. They did not fight to the end. They retreated when they began to see their army brothers getting killed. Remember the repeated call to Joshua to be strong and courageous. It appears the sons of Israel have gone to being weak and cowardly and, unbeknownst to Joshua, sinful. Certainly, retreating and not believing is also evidence of a lack of faith, which is also a sin problem.

What's the difference between being angry and being grieved over sin in the camp?

Why did Joshua grieve so deeply over this defeat?

The Lord reveals there is sin in the camp.

"So the LORD said to Joshua, 'Rise up! Why is it that you have fallen on your face? 'Israel has sinned, and they have also transgressed My covenant which I commanded them. And they have even taken some of the things under the ban

and have both stolen and deceived. Moreover, they have also put them among their own things. "Therefore the sons of Israel cannot stand before their enemies; they turn their backs before their enemies, for they have become accursed. I will not be with you anymore unless you destroy the things under the ban from your midst. "Rise up! Consecrate the people and say, 'Consecrate yourselves for tomorrow, for thus the LORD, the God of Israel, has said, "There are things under the ban in your midst, O Israel. You cannot stand before your enemies until you have removed the things under the ban from your midst." 'In the morning then you shall come near by your tribes. And it shall be that the tribe which the LORD takes by lot shall come near by families, and the family which the LORD takes shall come near by households, and the household which the LORD takes shall come near man by man. 'It shall be that the one who is taken with the things under the ban shall be burned with fire, he and all that belongs to him, because he has transgressed the covenant of the LORD, and because he has committed a disgraceful thing in Israel.'"

What had been hidden from Joshua was now being revealed by the Lord Himself. The Lord caused or allowed the defeat because of sin that had been committed. The Lord tells Joshua the sin was in regard to the things under the ban. The Lord says "Israel" has sinned and not a person or Achan has sinned. The Lord described this sin as stealing and deception. The Lord warns He will no longer be with them, and they will not be able to stand before their enemies. They are accursed. They will live with their backs to their enemies in retreat and loss. That is, unless they destroy the things under the ban.

The Lord gives instructions to consecrate the people as He had done so previously. The guilty party will be revealed by lot and burned because he transgressed the covenant of the Lord and committed a disgraceful thing. These severe consequences demonstrate the seriousness of sin in the eyes of the Lord. The cost of sin is death. The cost of our salvation was the death of Jesus Christ. Sin has a high price. People underestimate the pull and power of sin. Jesus Christ had to leave heaven and come to earth to die for our sins.

The sin in the camp is revealed.

"So Joshua arose early in the morning and brought Israel near by tribes, and the tribe of Judah was taken. He brought the family of Judah near, and he took the family of the Zerahites; and he brought the family of the Zerahites near man by man, and Zabdi was taken. He brought his household near man by man; and Achan, son of Carmi, son of Zabdi, son of Zerah, from the tribe of Judah, was taken. Then Joshua said to Achan, "My son, I implore you, give glory to the LORD, the God of Israel, and give praise to Him; and tell me now what you have done. Do not hide it from me." So Achan answered Joshua and said, "Truly, I have sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel, and this is what I did: when I saw among the spoil a beautiful mantle from Shinar and two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold fifty shekels in weight, then I coveted them and took them; and behold, they are concealed in the earth inside my tent with the silver underneath it."

Secret and hidden sin will all be revealed one day. It will be revealed on the days of judgment. Often time, secret sin comes out. The weight of the guilt sometimes results in confession to get out from under that guilt of the sin. Sometimes someone else finds out and exposes the sin. Here, the Lord works through casting lots to reveal that Achan was the guilty party.

Achan confessed his sin after being exposed in his sin. Many times, people do not confess until they are caught. David was caught by Nathan the prophet who stated, "thou art the man!" It was evident immediately upon the defeat at the hands of Ai that something was wrong. God revealed the sin. God's desire was not defeat but victory for His people. God does not condone or allow secret sin to go unpunished or paid for.

What are some consequences of unconfessed sin? Personally and corporately (on the church, family, work)?

What is the biblical way of dealing with sin in the camp? Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13

Joshua pronounced severe consequences for Achan's sin.

"So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and behold, it was concealed in his tent with the silver underneath it. They took them from inside the tent and brought them to Joshua and to all the sons of Israel, and they poured them out before the LORD. Then Joshua and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, the silver, the mantle, the bar of gold, his sons, his daughters, his oxen, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent and all that belonged to him; and they brought them up to the valley of Achor. Joshua said, "Why have you troubled us? The LORD will trouble you this day." And all Israel stoned them with stones; and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones. They raised over him a great heap of stones that stands to this day, and the LORD turned from the fierceness of His anger. Therefore the name of that place has been called the valley of Achor to this day."

The consequences of sin are underestimated by most people today. The prevalence of sin and the lack of a commitment to holiness make it easier to ignore or overlook sin than to address it and deal with it biblically. But the consequences of sin is eternally momentous.

What are the benefits of dealing with sin in the camp in a biblical way?

Why do Joshua and the Lord practice such severe consequences toward sin?

How serious is sin? Why do people not take sin as serious as God does?

How do you answer the question or accusation this punishment was too severe for the offense committed?

Chapter 8: The Conquest of Ai

Joshua hears the Lord's promise to conquer their past defeat.

"Now the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not fear or be dismayed. Take all the people of war with you and arise, go up to Ai; see, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, his people, his city, and his land. "You shall do to Ai and its king just as you did to Jericho and its king; you shall take only its spoil and its cattle as plunder for yourselves. Set an ambush for the city behind it."

Chapter eight is really one of the great chapters in the Bible. It provides hope for the fallen warrior and demonstrates God's commitment to fulfill His promise and His plan for His people. It is almost like a recommissioning. The Lord is taking Joshua back in time. First, the Lord is speaking to Joshua. Second, he tells him to "not fear or be dismayed." Third, the Lord tells like before, *"I have given into your hand the king of Ai."* The Lord had not abandoned his people because they had repented of their sin.

Here we see the gospel in the Old Testament. Throughout redemption history, God is redeeming for Himself a people. Although they had sinned, God takes great delight in saving lost sinners who repent and trust in Him. The defeat at Ai was a momentary defeat in a war that has already been won in the heavenlies. One or two or ten missteps does not erase the will and plan of God. Your sin cannot thwart the sovereign plan of God. Our sin prevents us from experiencing the blessing and fullness of God in those moments of sinful rebellion.

Joshua and the sons of Israel had to face their past defeat and gain victory over it. God's plan and promise was to give them victory over Ai. Their sin prevented them from victory.

Discuss God's plan of redemption where a singular defeat does not negate the sovereign plan of God. Discuss the sufficiency of the gospel for salvation and redemption. Discuss how valiant warriors should reject any theory or philosophy that eliminates the sufficiency of the Gospel (i.e. works salvation, critical race theory, etc.) leading to no hope of biblical salvation.

Joshua chooses valiant warriors to avenge their past defeat.

"So Joshua rose with all the people of war to go up to Ai; and Joshua chose 30,000 men, valiant warriors, and sent them out at night."

Joshua uses brilliant but conventional military strategy this time.

At Jericho, the strategy was unconventional. Here is a more conventional military strategy. A group would engage the warriors from Ai at the city and lead them out away from their city. Another group would be hiding and upon abandoning their city in pursuit of the first group, this second group would go in and burn down the city. Then after seeing the smoke from the city, the first group would then cease retreating and attack their pursuers. They could not return to their city because it was on fire. The city group would then move in for a rear attack.

This strategy came from the Lord. The key takeaway here is that we must listen

to Lord every day and for everything. The Lord wants to give us and actually guarantees us victory. He wants us to ask, seek, and find His plan for this day and this battle.

Ai was the only military defeat in Joshua. From a human perspective, it was an avoidable defeat. For those of us who have been saved by the grace of God, we do not have to sin, but we often choose to sin. When we sin, we forfeit fellowship and blessing, while never losing our relationship and destiny in Christ.

Read the rest of the story and answer the questions at the end.

"He commanded them, saying, 'See, you are going to ambush the city from behind it. Do not go very far from the city, but all of you be ready. 'Then I and all the people who are with me will approach the city. And when they come out to meet us as at the first, we will flee before them. 'They will come out after us until we have drawn them away from the city, for they will say, 'They are fleeing before us as at the first.' So we will flee before them. 'And you shall rise from your ambush and take possession of the city, for the LORD your God will deliver it into your hand. 'Then it will be when you have seized the city, that you shall set the city on fire. You shall do it according to the word of the LORD. See, I have commanded you.'" So Joshua sent them away, and they went to the place of ambush and remained between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of Ai; but Joshua spent that night among the people.

Now Joshua rose early in the morning and mustered the people, and he went up with the elders of Israel before the people to Ai. Then all the people of war who were with him went up and drew near and arrived in front of the city, and camped on the north side of Ai. Now there was a valley between him and Ai. And he took about 5,000 men and set them in ambush between Bethel and Ai, on the west side of the city. So they stationed the people, all the army that was on the north side of the city, and its rear guard on the west side of the city, and Joshua spent that night in the midst of the valley. It came about when the king of Ai saw it, that the men of the city hurried and rose up early and went out to meet Israel in battle, he and all his people at the appointed place before the desert plain. But he did not know that there was an ambush against him behind the city. Joshua and all Israel pretended to be beaten before them, and fled by the way of the wilderness. And all the people who were in the city were called together to pursue them, and they pursued Joshua and were drawn away from the city. So not a man was left in Ai or Bethel who had not gone out after Israel, and they left the city unguarded and pursued Israel.

Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Stretch out the javelin that is in your hand toward Ai, for I will give it into your hand." So Joshua stretched out the javelin that was in his hand toward the city. The men in ambush rose quickly from their place, and when he had stretched out his hand, they ran and entered the city and captured it, and they quickly set the city on fire. When the men of Ai turned back and looked, behold, the smoke of the city ascended to the sky, and they had no place to flee this way or that, for the people who had been fleeing to the wilderness turned against the pursuers. When Joshua and all Israel saw that the men in ambush had captured the city and that the smoke of the city ascended, they turned back and slew the men of Ai. The others came out from the city to encounter them, so that they were trapped in

the midst of Israel, some on this side and some on that side; and they slew them until no one was left of those who survived or escaped. But they took alive the king of Ai and brought him to Joshua.

Now when Israel had finished killing all the inhabitants of Ai in the field in the wilderness where they pursued them, and all of them were fallen by the edge of the sword until they were destroyed, then all Israel returned to Ai and struck it with the edge of the sword. All who fell that day, both men and women, were 12,000—all the people of Ai. For Joshua did not withdraw his hand with which he stretched out the javelin until he had utterly destroyed all the inhabitants of Ai. Israel took only the cattle and the spoil of that city as plunder for themselves, according to the word of the LORD which He had commanded Joshua. So Joshua burned Ai and made it a heap forever, a desolation until this day. He hanged the king of Ai on a tree until evening; and at sunset Joshua gave command and they took his body down from the tree and threw it at the entrance of the city gate, and raised over it a great heap of stones that stands to this day."

Joshua reaffirms the covenant through an altar and the Word.

Before taking Jericho and Ai, Israel had paused at Gilgal to memorialize its crossing (chapter four) and to observe various rituals of purification (chapter five). Now, after these victories (as well as a defeat) and before further encounters with the Canaanites, Israel again paused to confess and to celebrate with sacrifices and covenant renewal at a different place, Mount Ebal. After the sin of Achan and the defeat at Ai, the nation again needed a ceremonial reminder of its relationship with God. First, the cause of the sin and the defeat was removed (7:25–26), and then victory was secured (8:1–29). But, before proceeding further, sacrifices and a renewal of the nation's covenant obligations were in order.

"Then Joshua built an altar to the LORD, the God of Israel, in Mount Ebal, just as Moses the servant of the LORD had commanded the sons of Israel, as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of uncut stones on which no man had wielded an iron tool; and they offered burnt offerings on it to the LORD, and sacrificed peace offerings. He wrote there on the stones a copy of the law of Moses, which he had written, in the presence of the sons of Israel. All Israel with their elders and officers and their judges were standing on both sides of the ark before the Levitical priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD, the stranger as well as the native. Half of them stood in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, just as Moses the servant of the LORD had given command at first to bless the people of Israel. Then afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the book of the law. There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded which Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel with the women and the little ones and the strangers who were living among them."

Describe keys to avenging previous defeats, overcoming setback, and staying committed to the finish line of God's plans and purpose.

Discuss how God works in different ways at different times and situations (i.e. Jericho was unconventional with marching around and blowing trumpets and shouting; Ai was convention military strategy).

What's the importance of building an altar (8:30)?

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

¹F.B. Meyer, *Joshua and the Land of Promise*, (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade 1977) 19



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