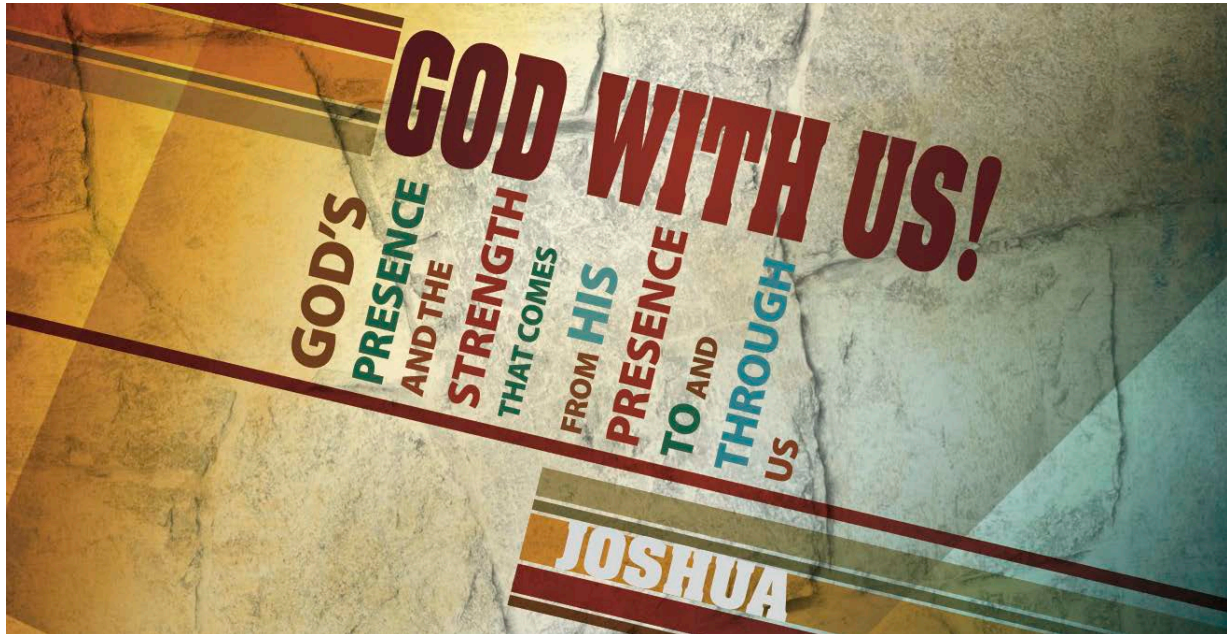


Week 10, Joshua 22–24

Hook



Main Point: God desires commitment.

Current Event: Where do you get your news? For many, television news anchors provide insight into the world and are a primary means of gaining global information. When thinking of some of America's most well-known anchors, a particular sign-off phrase might come to mind; these are the words used to close the program. Ask your class to match the news anchor to his or her final words at the close of each broadcast:

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------------------------|
| 1. Linda Ellerbee | a. "Good day." |
| 2. Paul Harvey | b. "Good night and good luck." |
| 3. Walter Cronkite | c. "That's part of our world tonight." |
| 4. Dan Rather | d. "Peace." |
| 5. Edward R. Murrow | e. "And so it goes." |
| 6. John Daly | f. "And that's the way it is." |
| 7. Dave Garroway | g. "Good night and a good tomorrow." |

Today's lesson will examine the final recorded words of Joshua in the Scripture, revealing his heart and challenge for those who would follow the Lord.

Answers: 1. e, 2. a, 3. f, 4. c, 5. b, 6. g, 7. d

Week 10, Joshua 22–24

Book

Main Point: God desires commitment.

Text Summary: The final three chapters of Joshua are farewell speeches: the first to the eastern tribes who return home to the other side of the Jordan (although not before a misunderstanding nearly brings civil war), the second to the leaders of Israel and the third to the entire congregation. As Joshua nears death, his tone is stern and urgent—the next generation must choose their God.

Joshua 22:1–6, 11–34 (Read)

Sub Point: God desires a commitment to unity.

The eastern tribes of Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh stood before Joshua to hear the long awaited words:

“You have kept all that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you and have obeyed my voice in all that I have commanded you ... And now the Lord your God has given rest to your brothers, as he promised them. Therefore turn and go to your tents in the land where your possession lies, which Moses the servant of the Lord gave you on the other side of the Jordan” (2,4).

They were going home! Rest was the goal and rest had come (1:12–15). Joshua reminded the tribes of God’s word through Moses to serve the Lord, love the Lord, walk in His ways, and observe His commandments. With his leadership coming to an end, Joshua, in these final three chapters, blesses the people, pleads with them to follow the Lord and obey Him, warns them of the consequences of worshipping other gods, reminds the people of God’s faithfulness, and challenges them to keep their covenant.¹

So as Joshua blesses the tribes and sends them on their way to their homes, confusion ensues. Three tribes, the Reubenites, Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, set out from Canaan to return to Gilead, and on their way home erect an altar by the Jordan. When Israel hears this, they prepare themselves for war. What was done in a spirit of unity comes close to destroying the unity of the nation. Israel, as they had already experienced, feared the consequences of rebellion against Yahweh.

The people confronted the three tribes, reminding them of the aftermath of the rebellion that Israel had already seen, the nation’s sin at Peor and Achan’s sin at Jericho. Their sin wasn’t

¹ Howard, David [1998] *New American Commentary: Joshua*. Nashville: B&H Publishers, p. 402.

isolated. Verse 20 shows the fear for the entire nation, fear that their fellow Israelites' actions, perceived as worship of other gods, would bring punishment down on the entire nation, just as with Achan.² For Israel, the law teaches how communal worship unifies the tribes, rather than divides them.³ In all of life, right worship is the chief concern.

Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh admitted to building the altar for “witness,” not sacrifice, as they feared future generations saying, “*What have you to do with the Lord, the God of Israel? For the Lord has made the Jordan a boundary between us and you*” (24–25). The brethren came to an agreement and unity was restored. The three tribes explained their steadfast commitment to the Lord alone.

Christians learn from this account in chapter 22 the need for discipline. This passage teaches that unity among the people of God is achieved through procedures for reconciling disputes and giving grace and an opportunity to explain possible offenses.⁴ In the end, Israel understands that proper worship of God is of primary importance. That is what unites. The church is unified not under homogenous worship practices or service structures, but under the focus of our worship and the reason behind our service: God and God alone. That is the true sense of unity.

Though misunderstandings are uncomfortable, the church can learn from Israel's initiative—they were zealous to guard the sacredness of God's altar and the unity of the people.

Rest brings a new set of challenges to Israel. What unique challenges have you experienced in times of rest?

Matthew 18:15–17 is a guideline for addressing disagreements among church family. How is this like/unlike what western Israel did in confronting eastern Israel? Describe a time when you followed the guideline in Matthew 18:15–17.

What does Romans 10:9 say about membership in the community of faith?

Joshua 23 and 24 (Read)

Sub Point: God desires a commitment to a healthy relationship with Him.

The tone of Joshua's final speeches is urgent and severe. He addresses the leaders in chapter 23 and concludes with a prophecy to the entire congregation in chapter 24. Central to his teaching was God's holiness: the Lord is pure, righteous and jealous. Joshua's premiere concern was that Israel would forsake God.

² Howard, David [1998] *New American Commentary: Joshua*. Nashville: B&H Publishers, p. 410.

³ Hess, Richard [1996] *Tyndale Old Testament Commentary: Joshua*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, p. 316.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 319.

Joshua reminds the leaders that the Lord will continue to expel the foreign nations that remained within Israel's new borders; He will continue to act. The key was to remember it was the Lord who would fight for them. There was a standard to bear:

Therefore, be very strong to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, turning aside from it neither to the right hand nor to the left (23:6).

While Joshua tells the people of the Lord's faithfulness, he reminds them the Lord's continued provision hinges on their obedience. Joshua's speeches resemble the deathbed farewells of other Old Testament leaders, such as Jacob, Joseph, Moses and David.⁵ Joshua encourages and exhorts the people, but he also delivers sobering warnings. For just as good things would happen if they obeyed, bad things would occur if they disobeyed.⁶ His speeches contain the following main points:⁷

1. Reflects on the mighty deeds of God
2. Urges the Israelites to remain faithful to the Lord
3. Advises Israel to refrain from turning to the right or to the left
4. Prohibits the people from worshipping foreign gods

Joshua gives the vital reminder that what God gives He can take away. The land has always been His. This all crescendos with a choice when Joshua famously says, *"Choose this day whom you will serve ... but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD"* (24:15).

Israel responds with a personal commitment, *"We will serve the LORD; for He is our God"* (24:18).

After reminding them in chapter 24 of all the Lord had done and all the promises He fulfilled, the picture is complete. It is time for Israel's earnest commitment to the covenant relationship with Yahweh.⁸ The closing chapter shows Yahweh's desire for all of Israel's worship. He wants their undivided attention and will not allow them to compromise their relationship with Him. If they do, disaster will come, for He does not share His glory.⁹

Review the "I statements" God makes in Joshua 24:2-13. What all did He do for Israel?

Read Joshua 24:10. How does this verse ring true for the believer today?

⁵ Hess, Richard [1996] *Tyndale Old Testament Commentary: Joshua*. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, p. 323.

⁶ Howard, David [1998] *New American Commentary: Joshua*. Nashville: B&H Publishers, p. 417.

⁷ Longman III, Tremper and David E. Garland, [2012] *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Revised Edition: Numbers-Ruth*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, p. 1032.

⁸ Longman III, Tremper and David E. Garland, [2012] *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Revised Edition: Numbers-Ruth*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, p. 1036.

⁹ Ibid.

The closing chapters of Joshua remind us of the need to remain focused in mission. How is your class doing in reaching, learning and loving (the mission of Bible Fellowships)? In which areas does your class excel? Which areas need improvement?

Week 10, Joshua 22-24

Took



Main Point: God desires commitment.

Group Activity: Lead your class through a time of reflection over the book of Joshua.

What did you learn (or of what were you reminded) about God's character through the book of Joshua? How should this information inform the way you live?

What characters in Joshua made an impression on you and why?

In what ways does the book of Joshua point to Jesus?

Lesson Conclusion: The book of Joshua is a powerful testimony of the Lord's faithfulness: He will do what He says He will do. God desires commitment from those who will follow Him.

Challenge

Commit to unity. Unity among believers is possible through the power of the Holy Spirit. Commit to pursuing unity, not jumping to conclusions, and seeking to provide believers with opportunities to explain themselves. Put arrogance and self-entitlement to death; instead choose to place others before yourself and seek God-honoring unity.

Seek God-honoring resolution to conflict. Reasoned, graceful, prayerful accountability is essential to spiritual growth. When engaging in conflict, particularly such that arises from a community pursuit of holiness, season words and deeds with love. Ignoring dangerous behavior in efforts to promote peace is hazardous, but conflict without love as the motivation and restoration as the goal is destructive.

Commit your life and leadership wholly to the LORD. Whom do you serve? Do you serve only yourself? The book of Joshua reminds the believer of God's great power and His desire to provide leadership to His children. Perhaps you find yourself stalled, dully going from day to day without experiencing spiritual growth or victories in the Lord. Today, choose to give everything

you have to the Lord. Furthermore, choose to commit your areas of influence, the people and organizations that you serve, completely to the Lord.