A background image showing several hands holding open Bibles, with the pages of the Bibles visible. The hands are of different skin tones, suggesting a diverse group of people. The Bibles are held in a way that the pages are fanned out, creating a sense of shared study or prayer.

New Pilgrim Rest Missionary Baptist Church

Billy L. Bell, Sr., D.Min-Senior Pastor/Teacher
1930 Gallagher Street- Dallas, TX 75212

2022

ANNUAL LESSONS

6:30–7:15pm

Momentum Men Moment on Mondays

JOIN US!

MEN'S BIBLE
STUDY

MONTH OF JANUARY

Prerequisites for Fearless Living (Joshua 1:1–18)



More than anything else, fear keeps us from fulfilling God's will for our lives. We fear failure, being different, being labeled as religious fanatics, etc. One of the greatest "fearless living" stories in the Bible is the life of Joshua. About 1,300 years before Christ, Joshua was born into Egyptian slavery. His name means "Jehovah is salvation" and is the Hebrew form of the Greek name translated "Jesus." Moses was the great law-giver who led the Israelites out of Egypt. Joshua was the military genius who fearlessly led them into battle.

In addition to his fearless faith, one of Joshua's most remarkable traits was his pure heart. When Moses came down from Mount Sinai after receiving the Ten Commandments, Joshua was waiting at the foot of the mountain, guarding God's leader. They could hear the noise of the Israelites shouting as they worshipped the golden calf (Ex 32:17a). However, because Joshua doesn't even think in sinful terms, what does he say when he hears the noise (32:17b)?

Because of his pure heart, Joshua can't imagine God's people would be sinning. We need more Joshuas, who don't even think in sinful terms. I love Joshua, and I'm glad I have a grandson named "Joshua." I pray he lives up to that honorable name. There are at least three **prerequisites for fearless living** ...

Let go of the past (1:1–2)

As the book of Joshua opens, the Israelites have just finished forty years of wandering in the wilderness. As they arrive a second time at the border of the Promised Land, only Joshua and Caleb remain from the original fighting men who left Egypt. All the other men over age twenty died in the wilderness because they lacked faith (Num. 14:29 & Josh. 5:6). What does God now say to Joshua (1:2a)?

Why does God say that to Joshua? Because fearless faith requires letting go of the past. The past may include a bad church experience, failure, sin, divorce, or the death of a spiritual mentor like Moses. Whatever it is, we must let go of the past so we will be ready for the present.

To live fearlessly, **let go of the past** and ...

Trust God's promises in the present (1:3–6, 7a & 9)

After telling Joshua to **let go of the past**, God tells him He will give the Israelites the land promised to Abraham (1:4; Gen. 15:18). However, in Joshua 1:3, what condition does God place on the promise?

They had to literally step out in faith. God's promises always have a premise and part of that premise always involves fearless faith. The Lord promised to give them the land, but they had to march over every part of it. "Fearless living" understands God will do His part, but there is always a part for us to do. Faith does not presume on God; it trusts Him as we do His will.

Joshua needs encouragement to take the land because some of the cities are strongly fortified and their armies large and well-trained. Therefore, the Lord tells him no one will *be able to stand* against him (1:5a). Next, we come to the key verse in the book of Joshua and also the key to fearless living—Joshua 1:5b. Write it below:

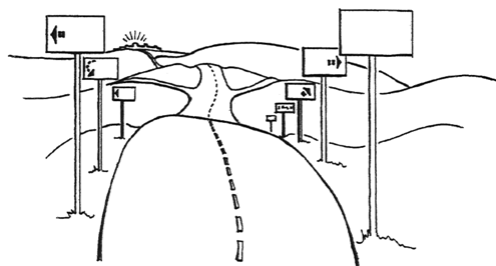
God never promises our lives will be free of problems or pain. But, He does promise He will be with us through it all.

Three times in this chapter God says to Joshua: "Be strong and courageous" (1:6, 7, & 9). In other words, "Live fearlessly." Faith is not just believing; it is doing. Faith means nothing until it causes us to fearlessly do something for God.

Fearless living doesn't just believe in God; it obeys and trusts Him even when it's tough. God also tells Joshua not to be *frightened* or *dismayed* because He will be with Him wherever he goes (1:9). One of Satan's best weapons for preventing us from doing God's will is using circumstances to plant thoughts in our minds that cause us to be *frightened*. The more important the task, the more Satan tries to make us *afraid*, which results in our being *discouraged*. At those times, what do we need to be able to say with the psalmist (Psalm 56:11)?

To live fearlessly, **let go of the past, trust God's promises in the present**, and ...

Study God's Word for guidance in the future (1:7b–8 & 10–18)



To prepare Joshua for the future, God tells him to be *careful to do according to all the law Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have*

good success wherever you go” (1:7b). This means: “Keep on the biblical road and stay out of Satan’s ditches.” Next, God tells Joshua: “*This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth*” (1:8a). This refers to the Hebrew custom of reading and studying the Bible by reading aloud, which greatly aids in concentration. I go over my sermons aloud like this in my study just before I preach. Not letting God’s Word depart from our mouths also includes obeying what command in Deuteronomy 6:7?

God also tells Joshua to “*meditate on it day and night*” (1:8b). How do you *meditate*? If you know how to worry, you know how to *meditate*. Worry is taking a fearful thought and thinking about it over and over from every angle. Meditation is taking a verse of scripture and thinking about it over and over from every angle, looking for application. Meditation always has application as its goal. According to Psalm 1:3a–b, what is the result of meditating on God’s Word?

Therefore, when we *meditate* on the Word of God, we stay spiritually healthy and strong during the difficult seasons of life.

Bible study and scripture memory should never be an end in themselves. We must also *meditate*, which always enables us to apply God’s Word to our lives. Only then can we be sure “*to do according to all that is written in it*” (Josh. 1:8c). What is the promise for reading, studying, meditating on, and obeying God’s Word (Joshua 1:8d)?

A vital key to fearless living is knowing **how** to study the Bible, which requires asking the right questions as you study. A good book with which to begin is the book of James, which like all Bible books, should be studied by paragraphs. Don’t worry about verses you don’t understand; God will reveal them later. A great way to study a Bible passage is to answer the five SPECS questions:

Is there a (an) ...

- Sin to confess and forsake?
- Promise to claim?
- Example to follow?
- Command to obey?
- Stumbling block to avoid?



Only after using a Bible study method like the SPECS questions to study, meditate on, and obey God’s Word, can we experience what wonderful truth found in Psalm 119:105?

After receiving God’s commands and promises, Joshua calls the *officers* of Israel together. He tells them to get ready because in three days they cross the Jordan River to *take possession of the land*

that the LORD is giving them (1:10–11). Then, Joshua speaks to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh (1:12–14), who had asked Moses’ permission to settle on the east side of Jordan. Moses agreed under the condition they first help their brothers take the Promised Land and then return to the east side of Jordan (Num. 32:8–22). However, what did Moses tell them would happen if they did not help their brothers take the Promised Land (Numbers 32:23c)?

After I became a Christian, Virginia, my then wife-to-be, gave me a Bible with this statement written on the flyleaf: “This book will keep you from sin, but sin will keep you from this book.” If we do not live by God’s book, the Bible, we will sin and our sin will find us out. There are always consequences to sin that eventually catch up with us.

The two-and-a-half tribes agree to help take the land and then return to the east side of Jordan. They also agree to obey Joshua just as they did Moses (1:16–18). The chapter ends with the tribes making what statement to Joshua in the last phrase of verse 18?

Fearless living requires you to **let go of the past, trust God’s promises in the present, and study God’s Word for guidance in the future.**

MONTH OF FEBRUARY

Developing Fearless Faith (Joshua 2:1–24)



Now we come to the account of someone who demonstrates fearless, but surprising, faith. It is the story of Rahab, the first recorded Canaanite to believe in Jehovah. She is the polar opposite of Joshua. He was born to Israelite parents, witnessed the plagues in Egypt, miraculously crossed the Red Sea, ate manna from heaven, and saw the Shekinah glory of God as Moses received the Ten Commandments. Rahab is a wonderful example of the truth that anyone can have fearless faith, regardless of background or past sin. In Rahab's story we find at least **three** requirements for **developing fearless faith** ...

Trust God during frightening times (2:1–7)

As Rahab's story begins, Joshua *secretly* sends out two spies to bring back a report about Jericho. Why *secretly*? When Moses sent out his twelve spies, their report to the entire camp caused the people to fear because they lacked faith (Num. 13:32). Therefore, these two spies apparently will only report to Joshua and his military leaders. When the spies arrive in Jericho, they stay at a *harlot's house, named Rahab* (2:1). Some have tried to distance Rahab from her occupation by saying the Hebrew word translated *harlot*, or "prostitute" (ZĀNĀ, zaw-naw'), can also be translated "innkeeper." However, what is the opening phrase of Hebrews 11:31?

The Greek word (PORNĒ, por'-nay) used to describe Rahab in this verse has no meaning except "whore." God records Rahab's story in His Word because He wants us to know He cares about every sinner, even a prostitute. God wants us to know that no person, regardless of his or her sin, is beyond His love, mercy, and grace. I'm sure this story is special to the apostle Paul, who was also shown that *mercy* (1 Tim. 1:16a). How does Paul describe himself in 1 Timothy 1:15b–c?

Why did Joshua send out spies after what happened with Moses' spies? He did not need information about Jericho. Joshua knew his army was not going to take the city; God was. However, though Joshua did not know about her, Rahab needed the opportunity to confess her belief in Jehovah and be spared when Jericho was taken.

By divine Providence, the spies go to Rahab's house. They probably think strangers going to a prostitute's house will not raise suspicion. However, someone evidently sees them and tells the king of Jericho some Israelite spies are in town. The king sends a message to Rahab to bring the men out of her house because they are spies (2:3). It seems the spies are doomed, but **fearless faith** lives in Jericho in the most unexpected place.

Rahab, who has made her living selling her body, now risks her life for the spies because she has faith in the God of the Israelites. She hides them on the roof in stalks of flax and tells the king's messengers the spies have left the city and she doesn't know where they are. She then says they will need to hurry to pursue the spies. The men leave to go to the shallow crossing places of the Jordan River (2:5–7).

Now the question arises, "How could God bless Rahab for lying?" Her willingness to protect God's people was one of the greatest acts of faith in the Bible. Anyone suspected of collaborating with spies would certainly have been executed in the most barbaric way as an example. What would we think of her if she told the truth? A faithless coward would have turned over the spies to the king. God considers what Rahab did an act of fearless faith. Therefore, what does James 2:25 tell us about Rahab?

This means her actions revealed a saving faith, not that her works saved or justified her (Eph. 2:8–9). To develop fearless faith, **trust God during frightening times** and ...

Try to help others be saved (2:8–16)

When the king's men leave, Rahab goes up on the roof and makes a tremendous statement of faith for a woman who lives in a pagan city. She says she knows *the LORD* (JEHOVAH) has given them the land. Then, she tells the spies that because her people have heard about the miraculous Red Sea crossing and the Israelite victory over two Amorite kings on the east side of Jordan, their hearts *melt* in fear (2:8–11). This is a fulfillment of what promise made to Moses by the Lord (Exodus 23:27a)?

Hearing about the God of the Israelites caused most pagans to resist Him. However, Rahab desperately wants to be a part of God's people.

Before the spies leave, Rahab asks them to show *kindness* to her family by sparing their lives (2:12–13). Fearless faith is always concerned about others. Not only is Rahab concerned about her family's physical welfare, but she apparently wants them to become part of God's people. There is no such thing as selfish, fearless faith.

The spies assure Rahab they will treat her family *kindly*, if she doesn't have second thoughts and betray them. Rahab tells them to hide in the hills for three days, so they will not encounter their pursuers. Since her house is on the city wall, she lets them down by a rope through a window in her home, and they are in open country (2:14–16).

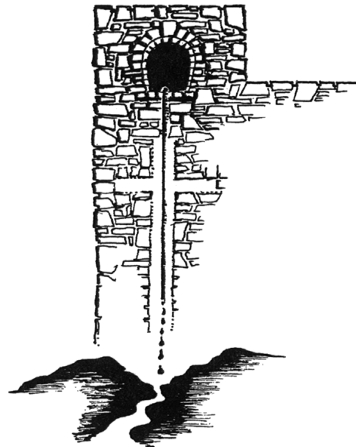
The reason God wants us to have fearless faith is so He can use us to bring about the salvation of others. How does the Lord Jesus sum up the most important purpose for fearless faith in Mark 1:17b?

If we are not trying to win our family, friends, and associates, we are not following Jesus and are not living in fearless faith.

Developing fearless faith requires we **trust God during frightening times, try to help others be saved, and ...**

Believe God will reward fearless faith (2:17–24)

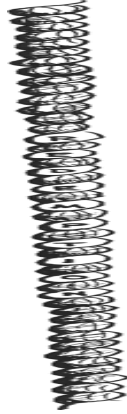
Since the spies do not know God’s plan for taking the city, they are anticipating a house-to-house battle during which her house would be spared. Therefore, they give her three conditions under which they will keep their agreement. First, she must identify her home with a *scarlet thread* (2:17–18a). Some believe this is a prophetic symbol of the blood of Christ, and is part of a “*scarlet thread*” that runs through the Bible. The Bible does not say this was God’s intent, so we can’t say for sure. However, there is nothing in the Bible to contradict this view.



Second, she must bring all her family into her home. Third, she must keep the mission of the spies a secret. Rahab agrees and ties the *scarlet thread* in her window (2:18b–21). Faith is more than just believing; it is doing. How does James 2:18d express this truth?

The spies hide in the hills for three days until their pursuers give up. They then cross the Jordan and report everything to Joshua (2:22–24).

Rahab is later rewarded and her family spared when the city is conquered (6:25). However, the reward for her remarkable, fearless faith doesn’t end there. Rahab marries a believer named Salmon (Sal’-mahn), who many think was one of the spies whose lives she saved. They have a son named Boaz (Ruth 4:21), who is the grandfather of Jesse. Jesse is the father of David, the greatest king ever to sit on the throne of Israel and the author of the most famous words ever written, Psalm 23. Rahab, the prostitute, is David’s undisputed great-great grandmother. To this day, the Star of David is on Israel’s flag.



Moreover, Rahab's reward goes further. She has an even more famous descendant. She, Salmon, Boaz, and Jesse are found in whose genealogy (Matthew 1:1a & 5–6)?

This is ultimate proof of how pleased God was with the fearless faith of the prostitute Rahab. She is a wonderful example of what promise in Psalm 103:12?

North and south meet at two places, the north and south poles. You can only go south so far. When you get to the South Pole proper, no matter which way you step, what direction will you be going? North! That's where north and south come together or meet. The same is true of the North Pole. However, east and west never meet. You can travel east as far as you want to and you will never meet west. God did not remove our sins as far as the north is from the south, but as far as the east is from the west. So, we will never meet our sins again.

Rahab's faith puts to shame most believers today. She never heard a preacher, never read a single verse in the Bible, and never attended a church. Yet, with the meager amount of information she had about God, she had a fearless faith, without which *it is impossible to please* God (Heb. 11:6a). Why, according to Hebrews 11:6b–c?

The Lord's reward for Rahab's fearless faith is mind-boggling. When we get to heaven, we will discover the Lord's reward for our fearless faith.

To develop fearless faith, **trust God during frightening times, try to help others be saved, and believe God will reward fearless faith.**

MONTH OF MARCH

Experiencing a Miracle (Joshua 3:1–17)



Try to remember one of the most exciting times in your life—a day for which you waited for years. It might be getting your driver's license, owning your first car, going on your first date, or marrying that special someone. You waited for years, thinking the day would never come. Suddenly, the day arrived. That's just the way it is for the Israelites. After waiting over 500 years, they can finally enter the Promised Land. What a great example of the fact God never gets in a hurry! Crossing the Jordan is the beginning of the fulfillment of what promise God made to Abraham in Genesis 15:18b?

The future boundaries of the land to be given to Abraham's seed were the *river of Egypt* (which could be either the Nile River or the Wadi el-Arish that is midway between Israel and Egypt) and the Euphrates. This part of God's promise was probably fulfilled during the reign of Solomon. What does 1 Kings 4:21a record?

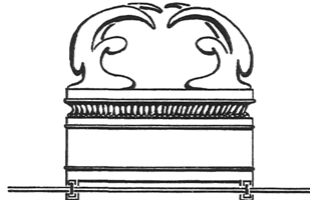
After waiting half a millennium, the Israelites are camped at *Shittim*, seven miles east of the Jordan River. They have been camping there for three days, getting ready to cross the river (3:1–2a). Now, we will see how God miraculously brings His people into the Promised Land. In this story, we find **three prerequisites for experiencing a miracle ...**

Consecrate according to God's precepts (3:2b–8)

God has given His promises to the Israelites, and now it is time for a test. The Israelites must cross the Jordan, but it is at flood stage (3:15). It is the worst time to cross but the best time for God to test their faith. So, the officers go through the camp and give God's instructions to the people. As soon as the people see the Ark of the Covenant carried by the *Levites*, they are to move out into position and follow the ark (3:2b–3).

During the wilderness wanderings, a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night were the symbols of God's presence and leading. As the Israelites cross the Jordan River and from this time forward, the ark will symbolize God's leading and His presence among His people. It is mentioned sixteen times in chapters three and four. The Ark of the Covenant was kept in the innermost room, called

the Holy of Holies, or Most Holy Place, of the tabernacle and later the temple. In Exodus 25:22, what does God tell Moses would be the purpose of the ark?



As they cross the river, the preeminence of the ark makes it clear this is not a military maneuver; it is an act of faith and fearless living. The ark was carried by poles placed through rings attached on each side. When the Israelites follow the ark, they are following God. The Israelites are also told to keep a distance of 2,000 cubits, or about half a mile, between them and the ark (3:4a). This was probably so the ark could be seen by all the Israelites.

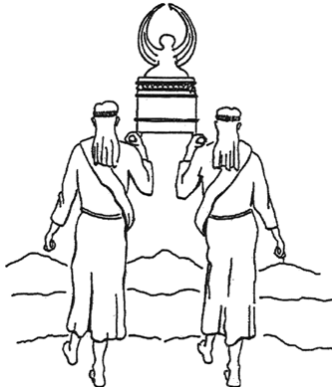
The Israelites are told to follow the ark so they will know which way to go because they *have not passed this way before* (3:4b). We all need to follow the Lord every day because each tomorrow we will live a day we have never lived before. If we follow the Lord, we will know which way to go when we come to the “Y’s” and intersections of life. In preparation for the crossing, what does Joshua also tell the people in Joshua 3:5b?

The word *consecrate*, or “sanctify” (QĀDASH’, kaw-dash’), means to make holy or hallowed. It involves spiritual purification, or repentance of all sin. We are consecrated, or sanctified, by applying the Word of God to our lives (Jn 17:17). In the last phrase of 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Paul tells us the reason we should sanctify ourselves to the Lord. Write it below:

Finally, Joshua tells the priests to take the Ark of the Covenant and go ahead of the people. The priests then take the ark and lead the Israelites to the edge of the swollen Jordan River (3:6). However, they are not told how they will cross. So, this is an act of faith that is required for “fearless living.” The Lord then tells Joshua, “*Today I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you*” (3:7). God verified Moses was His chosen leader by parting the Red Sea. Now, He will verify Joshua with a similar miracle. God then instructs Joshua to tell the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant to stand in the edge of the river (3:8).

To experience a miracle, **consecrate according to God’s precepts** and ...

Concentrate on God’s power (3:9–13)



Joshua calls the Israelites together and reassures them God will *drive out* the current inhabitants of the Promised Land. Then, he informs them the Ark of the Covenant will lead them across the Jordan. He also tells them to choose one man from each of the twelve tribes (3:9–12). The purpose for this is not revealed, but they would probably be closer to Joshua and the bearers of the ark to assist them. Also, these are probably the same twelve men who later lay stones in the river (4:2–3). Finally, what does Joshua tell his people will happen as soon as the feet of the priests carrying the ark touch the water of the Jordan River (3:13c–d)?

This means the water upstream would be supernaturally dammed up. It is important to note Joshua said, “*the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth*” (3:13a). The second *Lord* is in small case letters, not all capitals as is the first LORD (Jehovah). The second *Lord* translates the Hebrew word ADONAI (Ad-oh-nigh’), which means “master” or “boss.” Our great God is the *Lord*, or master, *of all the earth*. Every molecule and atom in all creation obey His voice. Therefore, what does Psalm 97:5 tell us?

Prerequisites for experiencing a miracle are: consecrate according to God’s precepts, concentrate on God’s power, and ...

Contemplate God’s promises (3:14–17)

With the river raging, the priests act in faith. The instant their feet touch the water’s edge, the water upstream is dammed up in a *heap* a great distance away, near a town called *Adam*, which is about 18 miles north of Jericho. Therefore, the Israelites cross over the Jordan River near Jericho (3:15–16). Why did the water miraculously stop flowing? The people acted in fearless faith! So, what does God require if we want to experience a miracle? We must obey God with fearless faith.

Many Christians are waiting on God to perform a miracle in their lives, while God is waiting on them to get their feet wet—to respond in faith. The only thing that limits God’s miracles in our lives is our *faith* (Mt 9:29b). Where do you need a miracle in your life? Your marriage, your finances, your education, or your work? Maybe in rescuing a wayward child or breaking a bad habit? Whatever it is, what does Jesus declare in Mark 9:23c?

Not only does God miraculously stop the water, but all the Israelites pass over *on dry ground* (3:17). Normally, it would take days for a river bed to become *dry ground*. The *dry ground* totally eliminates any natural explanation for the water stopping.

It should also be noted the priests carrying the ark do not immediately cross over the river. Instead, they stand in the middle of the river with the ark, representing God's presence, until the entire nation of Israel passes by and are safe on the other side (3:17). This is a wonderful example of what promise of our awesome Lord in Isaiah 43:2a–b?



Whenever you experience one of the “raging Jordans” of life, the Lord *will be with* you and will not allow it to drown you. To experience a miracle, **consecrate according to God's precepts, concentrate on God's power, and contemplate God's promises.**

MONTH OF APRIL
Maintaining Fearless Faith (Joshua 4:1–24)



After the Israelites miraculously cross the Jordan River, the Lord commands Joshua to do something that would encourage present and future generations to have fearless faith. He tells Joshua to choose one man from each of the twelve tribes. Each man is to take a stone from the middle of the Jordan where the priests carrying the ark are standing. They are then to pile up the twelve stones where they will camp that night. When future generations later ask what the stones mean, they are to tell them about the miraculous crossing of the Jordan (4:1–6). Finally, in the last sentence of Joshua 4:7, what does God instruct Joshua to tell the Israelites?

To maintain fearless faith, we all need memorials in our lives for at least **three** reasons ...

To remind us of the past (4:8–14)

After setting up the memorial stones at their camp, the selected men also set up twelve stones in the middle of the river where the priests stood (4:9). To maintain fearless faith, we must have memorials to remind us of the great things God has done. Although we cannot live in the past, we cannot forget past victories. Memorials cause us to remember. Jesus knew the importance of memorials in having fearless faith. Therefore, in Luke 22:19c, what does Jesus say about the bread when He instituted the Lord's Supper?

Because our faith can weaken and falter, we need to remember Jesus' tremendous sacrifice. When we observe the Lord's Supper, it reminds us of God's love for us and motivates us toward "fearless living."

The Israelites' camp was at Gilgal (4:19), which apparently became the base of operations for the Israelites (9:6; 10:6; & 14:6). Samuel conducted court at Gilgal (1 Sam. 7:16). Saul, the first king of Israel, was crowned at Gilgal (1 Sam. 11:14–15). When the Lord took Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, he and Elisha were leaving Gilgal (2 Kings 2:1, 11). The exact location of Gilgal is uncertain, but it was west of the Jordan River and believed to be about two miles east of Jericho (Josh. 4:19).

When times were discouraging and even scary, the Israelites could see the memorial stones and remember the power and faithfulness of God. The memorials also imply that in the days ahead such miracles will be rare. This is important for us to remember today. A careful study of biblical miracles reveals they cluster around critical periods of biblical history. They are associated with

the Exodus, the taking of the Promised Land, and some of the prophets. However, most of the prophets never performed a single miracle. Centuries passed in the Old Testament without a single miracle being performed. The only other time we see clusters of miracles is during the time of Christ and the apostles.

The purpose for miracles has always been to authenticate God's messengers or leaders during very critical times for His people. This was the purpose of the miracle of damming up the Jordan. What does God say to Joshua in Joshua 3:7b?

Miracles are rare in the Bible. Most of the greatest saints in the Bible never performed a miracle. For example, what do people correctly say about John the Baptist in John 10:41b?

It should also be noted, contrary to the miracle-working television evangelists, none of the people through whom God performed miracles profited financially or had multimillion dollar ministries because of the miracles.

Forty-thousand armed fighting men from the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh led the Israelites across Jordan as they followed the ark (Josh. 4:12–13). This was only a small part of the fighting men in these two and a half tribes. When the census was taken in the book of Numbers, there were more than 136,000 fighting men over the age of twenty in these tribes (Num. 26:7, 18 & 34). The rest of the men remained on the east side of Jordan to protect their families. These tribes had large herds of livestock, so they had asked Moses to allow them to stay on the east side of Jordan because it was fertile pasture land. Moses agreed to their request only if they would first help conquer the Promised Land, and then they could return (Num. 32). These fighting men were probably first in the procession because they would not have been hampered with families and goods and, therefore, could more readily maneuver and fight.

As already mentioned, miracles occurred in the Bible at critical times to authenticate God's messenger, or leader. Therefore, that day the Lord made Joshua a great leader in the eyes of all the Israelites. For the rest of Joshua's life *they stood in awe of him just as they stood in awe of Moses* (Josh. 4:14). Up to this time, Joshua had been a humble, faithful servant, working in Moses' shadow. This is an example of what promise of our Lord in Matthew 23:12?

Maintaining fearless faith requires memorials **to remind us of the past** and ...

To encourage us in the present (4:15–18)

After everyone has crossed over, the Lord tells Joshua to tell the priests carrying the ark to come out of the Jordan. They were the first ones in and the last ones out. As soon as they come out of the river, it returns to flood stage (4:16–18). Imagine the scene as the Israelites watch the raging river cover their path. There is no going back! They have left the bodies of their parents, grandparents, and Moses, Israel's great leader and lawgiver, in the desert. Even though Moses is dead, God is not and they must not turn back. How does Jesus express this principle in Luke 9:62b?



Like a farmer cannot look back while plowing, we can't follow the Lord effectively if we have divided interests. There are times in our lives when we must move on and not turn back. It may be moving to a new city, starting a new job, leaving home for school, getting married, or losing a loved one to death. Like the Israelites who watched the raging river close behind them, we cannot return to the past. However, we can know the God who was with us in the past will be with us in the present.

Maintaining fearless faith requires memorials **to remind us of the past, to encourage us in the present, and ...**

To teach others in the future (4:19–24)

Now Joshua leads the people to Gilgal, east of Jericho, *on the tenth day of the first month*, which would be our March–April. There he sets up the twelve stones taken from the Jordan River. Joshua then tells the Israelites when future generations ask about the stones they are to tell them about the

miraculous crossing of the Jordan and the Red Sea (4:19–23). However, the memorial stones serve another purpose. They also let all the people of the earth know *the LORD* is *mighty*, or powerful, so they *may fear the LORD* always (4:24). No single English word can convey the full meaning of the Hebrew word translated *fear* (YĀRĒ', yaw-ray'), which includes submission, obedience, and reverence.

This statement reveals God's concern for those who don't know Him. It was hearing about such miracles that caused Rahab to place her faith in Jehovah God (2:10–11). One of God's primary purposes in choosing Israel was so they would communicate to a lost world that He is the one and only God. How does God express this truth to Abraham in the last phrase of Genesis 26:4?



God gives us memorials of fearless living to teach our children and grandchildren. However, these memorials are also to be used as a witness to the world. We have a much better memorial than the twelve stones; it is the Bible, which contains the detailed record of God's miracles and a history of our spiritual ancestors.

Another important memorial is the cross on top of the steeple and over the baptistry of many of our churches. It is the international memorial for followers of Christ. This cross is a reminder of what truth we are to proclaim to the world (Romans 5:8)?

When a lost person asks about that memorial, we should be prepared with a short presentation of the Gospel, such as The Roman Road to salvation (Rom. 3:23; 6:23; 5:8; 10:9–10; & 12:1).

To maintain fearless faith, we need memorials **to remind us of the past, to encourage us in the present, and to teach others in the future.**

MONTH OF MAY

Experiencing God (Joshua 5:1–15)



God used the miracle of dividing the Jordan River to authenticate Joshua as His chosen leader. However, the miracle also sent a message to nonbelievers. When the kings who lived west of the Jordan heard of the miracle, their hearts *melted* and they were afraid to face the Israelites (5:1). It seems like an opportune time to attack the enemy, but God and Joshua know the spiritual condition of the Israelites is more important than any temporary military advantage. Therefore, in this chapter we discover the steps required for **experiencing God**. First ...

Consecration (5:2–9)

Joshua's military officers probably think now is the perfect time to attack. However, there is some unfinished spiritual business that needs to be addressed. So, God tells Joshua to *circumcise* the Israelites (5:2). In Genesis 17:11b, what does God tell Abraham is the purpose of circumcision?

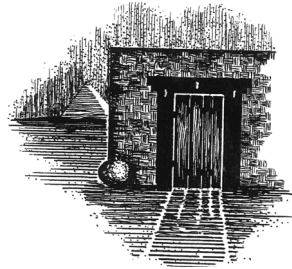
All the Israelite men who came out of Egypt had been circumcised, but all those born in the desert had not (5:3–5). The *token of the covenant* seems to have been suspended while a whole generation of Israelites without fearless faith died in the wilderness. Without faith, circumcision meant nothing. The same is true today regarding baptism and observing the Lord's Supper. They mean nothing without faith because of what truth in Hebrews 11:6a?

It takes a lot of faith to temporarily incapacitate his entire army in enemy territory. However, Joshua obeys God's command, and the men rest in the camp until they are healed (5:7–8). God then says to Joshua: "*Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you*" (5:9b). The *reproach of Egypt* is the accusation that originated with the Egyptians (Ex 32:12), which Moses quotes in Numbers 14:16. Write it below:

They are now safe in the Promised Land and consecrated to the Lord by the act of circumcision. Therefore, the Egyptian *reproach* has been *rolled away* (5:9). To experience God, there must be **consecration** and ...

Commemoration Preceded by Examination (5:10–12)

Next, the Israelites celebrate the *Passover* (5:10). They observe it on the same day of the year it was celebrated before they left Egypt. Only circumcised males could partake of Passover (Ex 12:48). It had only been observed two other times—once just before leaving Egypt (Ex 12) and again at Mt. Sinai (Num. 9:1–5). Like circumcision, the Passover had also been suspended during the wilderness wanderings because the Israelites lacked faith.



Passover was instituted to commemorate Israel's deliverance from Egyptian slavery. After sending nine plagues and the Pharaoh still refusing to let God's people go, God warned of the tenth plague, the death of the firstborn (Ex 11:5). However, the children of Israel would be spared if they sprinkled the blood of a male lamb without blemish on the sides and lintel of the doorframes of their houses (Ex 12:5–7). The Lord promised if they had the specified blood on the doorframe, He would *pass over* and the plague would not strike the firstborn in that home (Ex 12:13). What does God declare about Passover in Exodus 12:24?

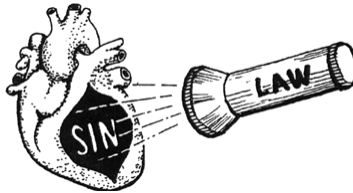
God intended Passover to be observed as a lasting *rite*, or memorial, of His divine deliverance. On the night before Christ was crucified, He observed Passover with His disciples in Jerusalem. During the meal, our Lord takes bread, gives thanks, and gives it to His disciples, telling them it represents His body. As He does, what does He say in Luke 22:19d?



In the same way, our Lord takes the cup after the Passover meal and says, “*This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood*” (Lk 22:20). The night before His crucifixion our Lord transformed Passover into what today we call the Lord's Supper or Communion. We are to observe this supper to proclaim His death until He comes again (1 Cor. 11:26). The Lord's Supper is really the fulfillment of what Passover pictured—the ultimate sacrifice for our sins so we might forever be free from the slavery of sin.

The prerequisite for participating in Passover was circumcision. In the same way, baptism is a prerequisite for participating in the Lord's Supper. If someone has not followed the Lord in baptism, he or she has not identified with God's people and is not worthy to partake of the supper.

Our Lord has commanded that all who follow Him be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Mt 28:19). That's why Paul gives what warning in 1 Corinthians 11:28?



We should *examine* ourselves to see if we have followed God's commands completely. Joshua precisely followed God's instructions for crossing the Jordan River, erecting the memorial stones, circumcising the men, and reinstating Passover. The requirements for **experiencing God** never change because God never changes (Mal. 3:6). Jesus says whoever obeys His commands is the one who loves Him (Jn 14:21a). Then, what does our Lord say in John 14:21b?

We can only experience God in the context of our obedience to the commands in His Word. This means obeying God's commands regarding baptism, the Lord's Supper, tithing, thought life, home life, business life, and every other area of our lives.

The day after Passover, the Israelites eat some of the harvest of the land. Then, the next day, the manna that had fallen daily for forty years stops (5:11–12). Now they can eat the harvest of the Promised Land instead.

Experiencing God includes: **consecration, commemoration preceded by examination**, and ...

Desire for Divine Communication (5:13–15)

Feeling the tremendous burden of leading God's people to conquer the Promised Land, Joshua walks out of the camp seeking a word from God. He is near Jericho and can probably see the seemingly invincible fortress city. Its high, thick walls were impregnable by the standards of that day. Joshua had a long, honorable military record, but he had never led an attack against a fortified city. Israel's army did not have battering rams, catapults, or any of the armaments required to take a fortified city. All they had were bows and arrows, slings, and spears, which would be useless against the walls of Jericho.

Therefore, Joshua needs to communicate with the Lord. He looks up and sees a man standing in front of him with His sword drawn in His hand. The drawn sword is symbolic of readiness for battle. Joshua goes up to Him and asks: "*Art you for us or for our adversaries?*" (5:13) Joshua's question meets with an astonishing reply. What is it (5:14a)?

Joshua then falls face down on the ground, worships, and asks: "*What does my Lord say to his servant?*" (5:14c, NKJV). Joshua is experiencing what is called a "theophany" (thee-off'-uh-knee), an appearance of God in visible form to a human being. This fact is made clear because what does *the commander* say to Joshua in Joshua 5:15b?

This is almost the same thing God says to Moses at the burning bush (Ex 3:5b). That requirement is never made in the Bible in regard to the presence of angels—only of God.

To experience God, take these steps: **consecration, commemoration preceded by examination, and desire for divine communication.**

MONTH OF JUNE

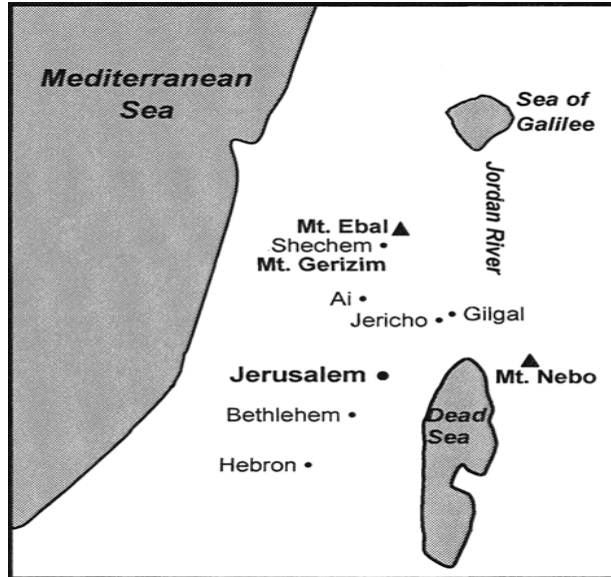
Defeating Your “Jerichos” (Joshua 6:1–27)



Now we come to the most famous event in *Joshua*, the fall of Jericho. Jericho is the longest continually inhabited city on earth. Its massive wall was impregnable by ancient standards. Since the inhabitants know the Israelites will soon attack, they have securely shut the gates of the city (6:1). In this chapter, we learn **three** requirements for defeating our own “Jerichos” ...

Be willing to appear foolish (6:2–11)

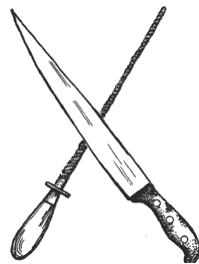
God’s instructions to Joshua seem a little strange. He tells Joshua to “*march around the city, all the men of war going around the city once. Thus shall you do for six days. ⁴Seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams’ horns before the ark*” (6:3–4a). On the seventh day, the soldiers and priests are to march around Jericho seven times, with the priests blowing their rams’ horns (6:4b). This must seem a little silly. They need ladders, catapults, ropes, and battering rams to defeat Jericho, not a bunch of preachers blowing trumpets.



God often calls us to do things that seem foolish to the world. Our Christian views on marriage, sexual behavior, and the Bible may seem ridiculous and out-of-date to non-believers. To the world, we look foolish when we go to church every Sunday and give our tithes and offerings. Yet, that is all part of “fearless living.” How does 1 Corinthians 4:10a describe fearless believers?

The inhabitants of Jericho probably stood on the city wall and made jokes about these ex-slaves who worshipped Jehovah God. If we demonstrate a fearless faith, at times we will appear foolish in the eyes of the world.

When Joshua gives God’s instructions to the priests and armed men, they immediately obey (6:6–9). Joshua then tells the people not to say a word while they are marching around the city (6:10). Why? God knows it only takes a few negative people or complainers to discourage a whole group. This is because of what truth found in Proverbs 27:17?



Just as iron rubbing against iron can sharpen a knife, so the company we keep affects our thinking and behavior. If you want to live fearlessly, stay away from negative, complaining people who always see the problems rather than the possibilities of fearless faith. Complaining is contagious. It spreads like cancer and counteracts faith.

God doesn’t want the Israelites to talk because He knows someone will probably say to the person next to him, “Don’t you feel silly? This won’t work.” Then, that person will say, “Now that you mention it, you’re right. What we are doing is foolish.” Those two will talk to two more, those four to four more, and so the negativism would spread throughout the whole group. Therefore, God

says, “No talking!” Without saying a word, seven priests with their trumpets lead the ark followed by the warriors. They circle Jericho once and then return to the camp for the night (6:11).

Like Joshua and the Israelites, to defeat your “Jericho’s,” **be willing to appear foolish** and ...

Trust in the Lord’s power (6:12–20)

The next morning, Joshua gets up early, implying his readiness to obey God (6:12a). Though not specified, this is probably when Joshua had his quiet time with God. One key for fearless living is to practice what principle found in Psalm 5:3?

The Israelites continue marching around the city each morning, as God commanded, for six days. On these six days they march around Jericho only once, but on the seventh day they march around the city seven times (6:13–15).

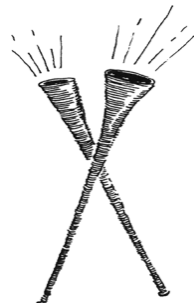
The emphasis on the number seven, which is found fourteen times in this chapter, cannot be missed. Also, the use of ceremonial rams’ horns and seven priests leading the ark make it clear this is not a military campaign. The stage is being set for a supernatural event. The defeat is not going to be through military might. Instead, God is presenting a wonderful example of what truth the Lord gives Zerubbabel in Zechariah 4:6c?

Joshua commands that Rahab and her family are to be spared, as the spies had promised (6:17). The seven days of marching around the city is saying to the people of Jericho, “Judgment is coming.” They had the same information as Rahab and could have surrendered or turned to God at any time. If they had submissively opened the gates and turned to God, they would have all been spared, because God is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34–35).

Jonah warns the people of Nineveh, the ancient capital of Assyria in modern-day Iraq, they will be destroyed in forty days. However, the king of Nineveh leads the city to repent and give up their evil ways (Jon. 3:4–9). When God sees their repentance, what happens (Jonah 3:10)?

God’s judgment on Jericho was just one more warning to the other Canaanite cities that they would be next. However, if they, like Rahab, would demonstrate faith in Jehovah, they too would be saved.

Joshua also warns the Israelites not to take from Jericho anything set apart for destruction, or they would be completely destroyed, and bring trouble on the camp of Israel. Also, everything made of silver, gold, bronze, or iron was sacred to the Lord and brought into Jehovah’s treasury (6:18–19).



When the Israelites hear the sound of the rams' horns, they shout as loudly as they can, and the wall of Jericho collapses. Then, the Israelites charge into the city and capture it (6:20). This is the greatest corporate act of faith in the Bible. The wall does not collapse because of Joshua, the trumpets, or the loud shout. How is this event explained in Hebrews 11:30a?

At times we all face what seems to be an enemy with impregnable walls. It may be health problems, financial reverses, career concerns, relationship difficulties, etc. The same God who brought down the wall of Jericho can “bring down” the most invincible wall in our lives. However, there is a requirement. What does Jesus declare in Matthew 9:29b?



The only thing limiting God's power in our lives is our lack of faith. So, to defeat your “Jericho's,” **be willing to appear foolish, trust in the Lord's power,** and ...

Expect your faith to grow (6:21–27)

When the wall collapses, the Israelites rush in and completely destroy the city and its inhabitants. Apparently, the only section of the wall left standing was where Rahab's house was located. Joshua tells the two spies to go to the prostitute's house and bring out Rahab and her family as they promised (6:21–22, 24).

Rahab and her family are put in a safe place outside the Israelite camp. They could not enter the camp because they were still unclean. Though the specifics are not recorded in this passage, Rahab's family becomes a part of God's people after observing appropriate rituals, including the circumcision of all the men in her family (6:23–25).

Joshua gives a solemn warning that anyone who lays the foundation for rebuilding the wall will be *cursed* and lose *his firstborn* son, while whoever rebuilds the gates will lose *his youngest son* (6:26). Apparently, Joshua is referring to the wall and not the city, because the city was resettled (Josh. 18:21; Judg. 3:13–14; & 2 Sam. 10:5). Rebuilding the wall would fortify the city, making it a military power. Also, if the city has no wall, it will be a visual reminder to future generations of God's power and faithfulness. Because of the miracle at Jericho, what do we read about Joshua in 6:27b?

The wall was not rebuilt until the time of King Ahab, about seven hundred years later. Hiel (Hi'-el), a native of Bethel, tried to make it a fortress city again. He laid its foundation, and his firstborn son died. When he set the gates, his youngest son died, according to the warning of the Lord through Joshua (1 Kings 16:34).

God allows us to have our own “Jerichos” to teach us about **fearless living**. Everything involved in the destruction of Jericho was designed to strengthen the faith of the Israelites. The same is true of our “Jerichos.” It is not enough for us just to read in the Bible about the victory at Jericho. We

must have our own “Jerichos” in which we experience God’s power working in our lives. Only then can we develop a fearless faith (Jas. 1:3–4). That’s why, when facing your own “Jericho’s,” you need to remember what truth in James 1:2?

Every one of your “Jerichos” can bring *joy* if you look at them as awesome opportunities to experience God’s power and take another step toward **fearless living**. This is because your “Jerichos” can cause your faith to grow (Jas. 1:3–4).

To defeat your “Jericho’s,” follow the example of Joshua and the Israelites: **be willing to appear foolish, trust in the Lord’s power, and expect your faith to grow.**

MONTH OF JULY

Avoiding Sin (Joshua 7:1–26)



We find a very important principle in this chapter of *Joshua*—success is sometimes more difficult to handle than failure. We are most vulnerable for the Evil One to lead us into sin when we are successful. The book of Joshua records two great successes, the crossing of the Jordan River and the fall of Jericho. Now, we come to chapter seven, which begins with the saddest word in the book—*But*. The Lord had commanded all the precious metals taken from the conquest of Jericho be put into the Lord’s treasury (6:19). *But*, Achan, from the tribe of Judah, disobeys this command, and the Lord’s anger burns against Israel (7:1). In this passage we find at least **three** reasons to avoid sin ...

1. The Pain of Sin (7:2–9)

Our sin affects other people, as we clearly see in this chapter. Joshua sends men to scope out Ai [aye’-eye] (see map on page 27). Upon their return, they arrogantly suggest only a small force of *two or three thousand men* is needed to attack Ai (7:3). This suggestion is based on the false assumption that Israel had defeated Jericho. Actually, all they had done was walk around the wall once a day for six days, seven times on the seventh day, and then shout and blow trumpets. God took the city! They had forgotten what promise the Lord gave through Moses in Exodus 14:14?

In the Christian life, few things are as dangerous as self-confidence based on pride instead of faith. When God is doing great things in our lives, it is often easy to forget the Source of our power or victories. During such times, we need to remember what principle in Proverbs 16:18?

Following the suggestion of the spies, Joshua sends about 3,000 men to Ai. They are soundly defeated by the warriors of Ai, who kill thirty-six Israelite warriors as the Israelites retreat. Because of this, the hearts of the Israelites melt in fear (7:4–5).

After this humiliating defeat that Joshua knows will embolden Israel's enemies, he tears his clothes and falls down before the ark of the Lord until evening. Joshua has been caught off-guard, and for the first time in his honorable life, his faith falters. Therefore, he prays, *“Alas, O Lord GOD, why have you brought this people over the Jordan at all, to give us into the hands of the Amorites, to destroy us? Would that we had been content to dwell beyond the Jordan!”* (7:7).

Joshua also tells the Lord their enemies will be encouraged by this defeat to surround the Israelites and wipe them out (7:8–9b). Joshua's reaction to the terrifying loss reveals he is human, just like us. He is simply pouring out his honest hurt and confusion to God. At times we all have feelings like Joshua. When life gets scary, we too forget previous victories and precious promises the Lord has given us. In the darkness of despair, we need to remember what promise in Psalm 18:28?

Finally, Joshua asks: *“And what will you do for your great name?”* (7:9c). To his credit, Joshua is most concerned about the honor of God's name. Every sin committed by a Christian adversely affects the honor of God's name. Achan's sin is an example of the far-reaching **pain of sin**, which is the first reason to avoid sin.

2. The Progression into Sin (7:10–23)

Though Joshua doesn't yet know about Achan's sin, he should be asking God the reason for Israel's defeat rather than questioning God's faithfulness. However, God understands Joshua's lapse in faith and that it is totally out of character for this great, fearless man. So, without any word of condemnation, the Lord tells Joshua the reason for their defeat was not in God but in Israel. God tells Joshua someone in the camp has violated His command and kept things that should have been destroyed or given to the Lord's treasury. He explains this is why He allowed Israel to be defeated by her enemies. God also tells Joshua He will not be with him anymore unless the sin is judged and the forbidden things destroyed (7:10–12).

This is a reminder that all God's promises are conditional. Every promise in the Bible has a premise. God gives the basic premise for His promises in Exodus 19:5a–b. Write it below:



The premise for all God's promises is full compliance to the commands in His Word, the Bible.

The Lord does not identify Achan to Joshua but gives him directions for finding the traitor. He tells Joshua to *consecrate*, or “sanctify,” *the people* (7:13). They were to purify themselves by confessing and forsaking all known sin. God never changes. Therefore, what eternal truth do we find in Proverbs 28:13?



The next morning the Israelites were to present themselves first by *tribe*; next by *clan*, which is a group of families related to a common ancestor; then by *household*, and finally *man by man* (7:14). We are not told how, but early the next morning God first reveals the culprit is in the *tribe* of Judah and then the *clan* within Judah. Finally, Achan is exposed as the transgressor (7:15–18).

Joshua asks Achan to tell him what he has done. Joshua knows Achan has sinned, but he doesn't know the specifics. Achan admits he is the one and tells Joshua he kept a Babylonian *cloak*, which would be similar to a tailored suit from Neiman Marcus. He tells Joshua he also kept *200 shekels of silver*, about five pounds. He also kept a *bar of gold weighing 50 shekels*, about one and one-fourth pounds. Then, he says it is all hidden in his tent (7:19–21).

Achan's confession clearly reveals **the progression into sin**. The three verbs *saw*, *coveted*, and *took* tell the whole story (7:21). Temptation always begins with the eyes, followed by a thought that when planted causes desire. How does James 1:15 describe the final step?

Achan makes no excuses, but he also shows no sorrow or repentance for disobeying the clear command of God. Nor does he express any grief that his sin has cost the lives of thirty-six of his fellow Israelite warriors. Achan may have reasoned that after all his suffering in the wilderness he deserved all the things he kept. Whatever the reason for his sin, God's commands cannot be violated without consequence.

Without credible and substantial evidence, Joshua could not carry out the sentence the Lord had decreed. Therefore, he sends *messengers* to search Achan's tent, where they find the evidence. They take the forbidden spoils to Joshua, who spreads them out *before the LORD* (7:22–23).

Achan is an example of the truth that *the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil* (1 Tim. 6:10a). As a result, what happens to some people who crave money (6:10b)?

To avoid sin, remember **the pain of sin, the progression into sin**, and ...

3. The Penalty for Sin (7:24–26)

Joshua and the Israelites take Achan, his family, and all his possessions, including livestock, *to the Valley of Achor* (a'-core). There the Israelites stone Achan and his family to death and burn their bodies (7:24–25). Since his family is also executed, they must have been accomplices in the crime because the law forbids the execution of children for the crimes of their father (Deut. 24:16). Only offenders could be punished for their own crimes. Also, according to Joshua 7:1, *the people of Israel* (plural) violated God's commands in regard to the things to be *devoted* to God. Now, it is

clear Achan's entire family was involved, although Achan no doubt led them into the sin. This is an example of what truth found in Proverbs 15:27a?

Achan's body is burned and buried under *a great heap of stones* (7:26). This seems to be a common method of burying infamous people. One example is when Absalom, one of King David's sons, led a rebellion against his father and was killed. David's soldiers bury his body under a large heap of rocks (2 Sam. 18:17).

The valley where they buried Achan was called *Achor*, which means "trouble" or "disaster." Because the sin in the camp has been dealt with, the Lord is no longer angry with Israel (7:26). Achan's sin is also an example of what truth in Proverbs 29:16?

Three reasons for **avoiding sin** are:

the pain of sin,
the progression into sin, and
the penalty for sin.

MONTH OF AUGUST

Turning Blunders into Blessings (Joshua 8:1–35)



Some of the most important life lessons God teaches us are results of our own mistakes. As someone has said, "A mistake is an opportunity to begin again, more intelligently." However, as Christians we should say, "A mistake is an opportunity to begin again, more spiritually." In this chapter, Joshua learns this life lesson as he discovers **three** principles for **turning blunders into blessings** ...

Try again immediately (8:1–2)

After the humiliating defeat at Ai, the Israelites consecrated themselves to the Lord. Joshua then dealt with Achan's sin as God instructed. Therefore, what are the first words Joshua hears from the Lord in Joshua 8:1b?



When Joshua hears these words, his heart must have pounded with joy because God spoke these same words to Moses when He sent out the twelve spies at Kadesh Barnea (Deut. 1:21). Moses also spoke these words to Joshua just before Moses' death (Deut. 31:8).

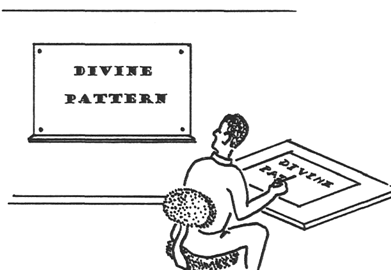
One thing we must always remember when we make blunders is our God is the God of the second chance. For example, God told Jonah to go east to Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire, which is in present-day Iraq. Jonah blatantly disobeyed, boarding a ship and sailing west. After two chapters detailing Jonah's disobedience, we read that God sends a large fish to swallow him. After three days and three nights, the fish vomits Jonah onto dry land (Jon. 2:10). Then, what does Jonah 3:1 tell us?

When we blunder, we often become discouraged, wondering if God can ever use us again. However, the worst blunder of all is not trying again. We are called to be champions for Christ, and a champion always tries again. When we blunder, we need to remember the Lord delights in the *steps of a good man* (Psa. 37:23). Therefore, what does the next verse tell us the Lord does when we stumble and fall in our faith (37:24b)?

Giving Joshua a second chance, God tells him to take the whole army and attack Ai again because He has already given the king and city to him. God also tells Joshua to destroy the city and its king as they did Jericho. However, this time they may keep the *spoil* and *livestock* (8:1b–2).

To turn blunders into blessings, **try again immediately** and ...

Follow God's plan precisely (8:3–29)



It takes humility for Joshua to follow God's plan because Ai has a far inferior military force and only 12,000 inhabitants (8:25). Joshua chooses 30,000 of his best warriors and sends them out at night (8:3). What does Joshua do with 5,000 of these warriors (8:12)?

The main army will attack and then pretend to retreat. When the army of Ai pursues them, the ambush party is to take the city, burn it, and then ambush the army of Ai from the rear (8:4–8).

Joshua takes his entire army (8:1 & 3) but probably attacks with only the 30,000, with the rest in reserve. We know that just the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh had over 140,000 fighting men (Num. 26:2, 5–34). That's an average of about 45,000 per tribe. Using that same proportion for the other tribes, the total Israelite army would number around 500,000. It isn't reasonable Joshua could lure the soldiers of Ai into leaving their city and attacking such an overwhelming army. Therefore, Joshua probably chose only 30,000 warriors—5,000 of whom would hide in ambush.

When Joshua attacks and pretends to retreat, the men of Ai leave the city to pursue them. The ambush party then enters Ai and burns it. When the men of Ai see the smoke rising in the sky, they have no chance of escape because Joshua and his army turn around to fight them from the front and the ambush party is coming from behind. All the inhabitants of Ai are killed. They hang the body of the king on a tree until evening and then, like Achan, bury it under piles of rocks. As promised, God allows Israel to take the *spoil* and *livestock* of the city (8:14–29).

If only Achan had waited. Like Achan, we often get ahead of God and make blunders. The Evil One always offers us a shortcut to what God wants to give us—money, success, sex, or whatever. The real test of our faith is our willingness to wait. That's why we have what command in Psalm 27:14?

Principles for **turning blunders into blessings** are: **try again immediately, follow God's plan precisely**, and ...

Worship God biblically (8:30–35)

After God gives them the victory, Joshua leads the Israelites about thirty miles north to build an altar to the Lord on Mount Ebal (ee'-bul), exactly as Moses commanded (8:30–31 & Deut. 27:4–7). This location is not random. Shechem was in the valley between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim (see map on page 27). It was there (Gen. 12:6) God first made what promise to Abraham (12:7b)?

Building an altar there acknowledges God is the source of their victories and is always faithful to His promises. Therefore, they are worshipping God biblically.

The valley between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim formed a natural amphitheater, which Joshua uses for a great worship service. Joshua follows God's instructions through Moses, so the altar was erected of *uncut*, or “*whole*,” *stones* that had not been shaped with iron tools (8:31a). This follows what command God gave through Moses in Exodus 20:25?

No human works could be associated with the *stones* in the altar. Apparently, this command was to teach a spiritual life lesson because God never gives a command without a reason. *Stones* not

worked with human hands could represent the fact that forgiveness of sin is completely the result of God's grace, not of works (Eph. 2:8–9).

After building the altar, the Israelites offer *burnt offerings* to atone for any sins (8:31c). To worship God biblically, the worshipper bringing the offering would lay his hands on the spotless animal to indicate it was taking his place. After the animal was killed, the priest sprinkled its blood around the altar (Lev. 1:3–9).

The burnt offering had to have value. In 2 Samuel 24, Araunah (uh-ron'-uh) offers King David his threshing floor, oxen, and wood—without charge—so he can give a burnt offering to the Lord. How does David reply in 2 Samuel 24:24b–c?

Therefore, David pays Araunah fifty shekels, about twenty ounces of silver, for the oxen and the threshing floor (24:24d).

The *peace*, or fellowship, *offerings* (Josh. 8:31) were given as acts of gratitude for unexpected blessings or answers to prayer (Lev. 7:11–12).

Finally, the Israelites watch as Joshua copies on stones the Law of Moses (8:32) as Moses commanded (Deut. 27:1–8). Then, Joshua assembles the people—Israelites, as well as the *sojourner*, or alien (8:33a). The *sojourner* was someone not born a Hebrew but who (like Rahab and her family) had become a believer in Jehovah God. Furthermore, what does Exodus 12:38a record happened when the Israelites left Egypt?

After assembling the people, Joshua reads the Law to them (8:34–35). The people stand facing each other, with half on the slopes of Mount Gerizim to the south and the other half standing on the slopes of Mount Ebal to the north. They were all facing the Ark of the Covenant surrounded by priests in the valley between the people, forming a natural amphitheater so the people could hear (8:33). The Levites were apparently stationed throughout the crowd. Why, according to Deuteronomy 27:14?



As the curses of the Law were read, the tribes on Mount Ebal would shout “*Amen*.” As the blessings were read, the tribes on Mount Gerizim would shout “*Amen*,” as commanded by God through Moses (Deut. 11:29; 27:12–26). This makes it clear when God’s Law is obeyed there will be blessings, but when it is violated, there will be curses (Deut. 11:26–28). Mount Gerizim is where the Samaritans later built their temple. It is the same mountain to which the woman at the well pointed when she told Jesus her fathers “*worshiped on this mountain*” but that Jesus worshipped in Jerusalem (Jn 4:20). How does Jesus respond to her in John 4:24?

Worshipping God *in spirit* is worshipping Him with sincerity and no pretense. Worshipping *in truth* is worshipping Him according to the truth of His Word because God’s Word **is truth** (Jn 17:17). Biblical worship always includes a sacrifice and the proclamation of God’s Word. Blood sacrifices are no longer required because Jesus is the final blood sacrifice. The biblical New Testament sacrifice is presenting our bodies as *living sacrifices* (Rom. 12:1).

Three principles for **turning blunders into blessings** are: **try again immediately, follow God’s plan precisely, and worship God biblically.**

MONTH OF SEPTEMBER

Making Good Decisions (Joshua 9:1–27)

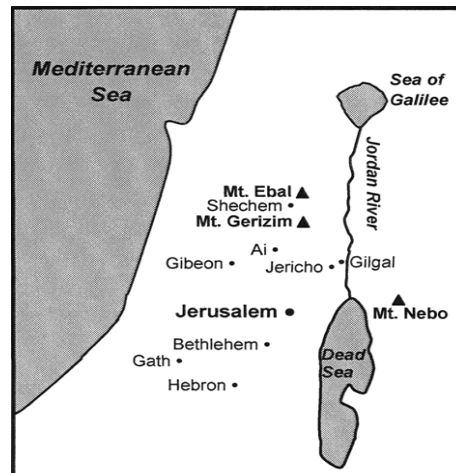


When are you most likely to make a bad decision? When you least expect it—such as when you are on a spiritual high. Satan loves to lead us into making a bad decision after a spiritual victory or after years of living for the Lord. That’s why we have what warning in 1 Corinthians 10:12?

Joshua and the Israelites have just won a victory at Ai and traveled to Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim for a wonderful worship service (Josh. 8). Now camped at Gilgal, they are on a spiritual high and ripe for a serious error in judgment. From their bad decision, we discover at least **two** requirements for making good decisions ...

Confer with God (9:1–15)

News of the victories at Jericho and Ai spread throughout the land. When the kings west of the Jordan River hear what has happened, several of them combine their armies to fight the Israelites. However, there is one exception. The people of Gibeon hear what the Israelites have done and decide to deceive Joshua and the Israelites. Therefore, the Gibeonites send a delegation disguised as weary travelers with worn sandals and clothes, as well as old, moldy food. When they find Joshua, they say they have come from a distant land to make peace (9:1–6).

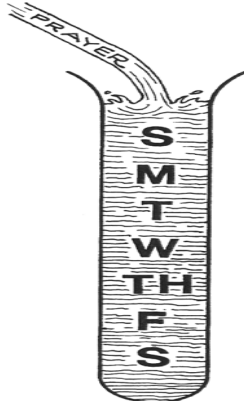


Why this deceptive tactic? Apparently, the Gibeonites are aware of the Mosaic Law that allowed the Israelites to make peace with distant countries not in the Promised Land, though without exception they were to completely destroy cities within Canaan (Deut. 20:10–17). Why were the cities in the Promised Land to be destroyed completely (20:18)?

God knew the pagan religions of Canaan were like a cancer that would spread. However, pagans (like Rahab) who placed their faith in the God of Israel would be spared.

The Gibeonites show a remarkable knowledge of the Law of Moses. After they tell Joshua they have come to make a treaty, the Israelites ask how they can know they have come from a distant land. The Gibeonites reply they have come as *servants* because of God's name (9:7–8). God commanded Moses when a distant country wanted to make peace, all the people of that city would become their servants and subject to forced labor (Deut. 20:10–11). The Gibeonites obviously know God's Word and are using it against God's people. This is what Satan sometimes does. For example, when Jesus is in the wilderness, Satan quotes Psalm 91:11–12 concerning God's promise to order His angels to protect Him. Then, he demands Jesus jump off the pinnacle of the temple to prove the reliability of that promise. Jesus refuses, explaining we are not to tempt, or test, the Lord our God (Mt 4:5–7).

The Israelites examine the Gibeonites' food to decide if they are telling the truth. However, circumstances and appearance are never enough. Simply depending on appearance and circumstances, the Israelites fail to make a good decision. Why, according to Joshua 9:14b?



Based purely on circumstances, Joshua makes a covenant with the Gibeonites, guaranteeing their safety (9:15). This peace treaty was a major decision with far-reaching repercussions. To make good decisions, we must remember we are not wise enough to recognize all of Satan's traps. Therefore, in any major decision, prayer should be our first step—not a last resort. It is not enough just to know the Bible because Satan can use our knowledge against us by appealing to our selfish natures. The Israelites had the entire Bible read to them by Joshua at Mount Ebal. However, God never intended to lead the Israelites, or us, exclusively with the Bible; Bible study must always be combined with prayer. That's why we have what command in 1 Thessalonians 5:17?

We should also give the Lord adequate time to answer our prayers, no matter what the circumstances dictate. Prayer that demands an immediate answer is **presuming** upon the Lord, not praying to Him in faith.

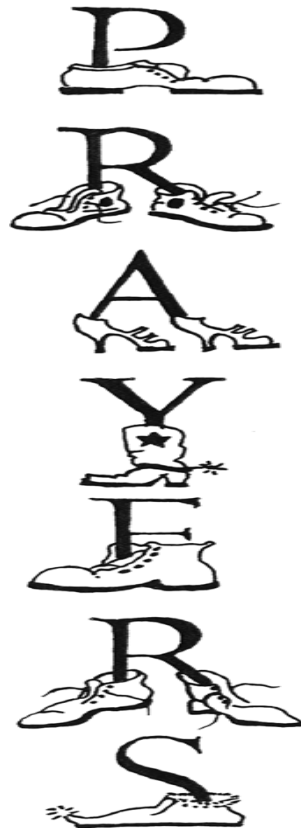
When we have a decision to make, we should *let the peace of Christ rule* in our hearts, or be the determining factor (Col. 3:15). When we pray about something and feel uneasiness or loss of peace, it may not be God's will or we may need to wait. To discover God's will, search the Scriptures and pray. When we do, we can then experience what promise of our Lord in John 14:27a–b that assures us we are making the right decision?

To make good decisions, **confer with God** but also ...

Confirm the information (9:16–27)

This step usually takes time. Here is a principle I try always to follow: **“Never make a major decision without waiting at least three days.”** Circumstances often change dramatically in three days. For example, things looked hopeless for the disciples the day Christ died on the cross. But of what does 1 Corinthians 15:4 remind us?

Ironically, *three days* after making a covenant with the Gibeonites, the Israelites hear they are neighbors who live nearby (9:16). To confirm what they have heard, the Israelites send out a party to investigate and discover the rumor is true.



The leaders of the Gibeonites control four strategic cities (9:17). Not occupying these cities in central Canaan could be a serious compromise of Israel's security. However, the Israelites do not attack because they have sworn an oath in the name of the Lord (9:18). Joshua and the Israelites have been embarrassingly deceived. Although their decision was based on false information, they have unintentionally involved God, His name, and His reputation. The Israelites are bound by the treaty, even though it was made under false pretense. Even when we make a bad decision, we must keep our word and our integrity. According to Psalm 15:4c, what is required to please the Lord?

People who honor God keep their promises and agreements, even in difficult situations. So, we should be very careful to make good decisions.

If only the Israelites had confirmed the information first! There is no substitute for taking time to confirm all information. Remember, God never gets in a hurry. Also, prayer presupposes we do our part first; otherwise we are trying to mooch off God. We must put "feet" to our prayers.

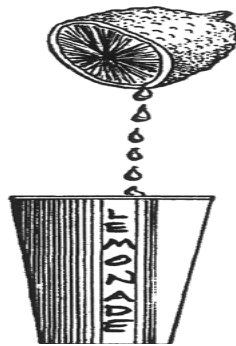
Bad decisions often have consequences that can affect generations to come. This covenant made with the Gibeonites was respected by the Israelites for centuries. However, what does 2 Samuel 21:2d record that Saul, the first king of Israel, tries to do to the Gibeonites?

As a result, God sent three years of famine on the nation of Israel (2 Sam. 21:1). We must be very careful to make good decisions because there are always consequences to our decisions—sometimes affecting our families, churches, or businesses for years to come.

Joshua summons the Gibeonites and asks them why they lied. They tell him they know about God's promise to give the Israelites the entire land and feared for their lives. They also tell Joshua

they are at his mercy and he should do whatever he thinks is right. Because he is honorably abiding by the treaty he made with the Gibeonites, Joshua doesn't allow the Israelites to kill them (9:22–26). Instead, what does Joshua do (9:27)?

This would put them in contact with the worship of Jehovah. As a result, the Gibeonites would be a blessing for centuries to come. At least one of King David's military leaders was a Gibeonite (1 Chron. 12:4). During the time of Nehemiah, the men of Gibeon helped repair the walls of Jerusalem (Neh. 3:7). So, with God's help, Joshua "took a lemon and made lemonade." In Numbers 22, Balaam was hired to curse the Israelites. However, of what does Moses remind his people in Deuteronomy 23:5b?



Our great God not only forgives our sins but can turn our **blunders into blessings**, as we learned in the last lesson. However, there are always consequences for making bad decisions. Therefore, as we strive to make good decisions, we should always **confer with God** and **confirm the information**.

MONTH OF OCTOBER Maintaining Your Integrity (Joshua 10–12)



The story of Israel's treaty with the Gibeonites continues. Though it should have never been made, Joshua has given his word in the name of Jehovah. Therefore, he keeps it because he is a

man of integrity. The prime ingredient of fearless living is having integrity or being upright. Regarding those who walk *uprightly*, what promise from God is found in Proverbs 2:7b?

People of integrity always do their best to be completely moral and do the right thing. **Maintaining your integrity** requires at least **three** things ...

Abide by your word (10:1–8)

The king of Jerusalem is terrified at hearing what Joshua has done to Jericho and Ai and about his treaty with the Gibeonites, who have a large, well-trained army (10:1–2). This is the first time the name *Jerusalem* is found in the Bible. It is the ancient city of Salem (Gen. 14:18). Gibeon is only about five miles from Jerusalem, which severely threatens Jerusalem's security. So, the king of Jerusalem appeals to four other kings in the region to attack Gibeon because they had made peace with the Israelites. He wants to teach the Gibeonites a lesson to prevent further defections. There is a quick response and the five kings, called Amorites, combine their armies and move their troops in place to attack Gibeon (10:3–5).

The Gibeonites send messengers to Gilgal to ask Joshua for help (10:6). It would be easy for Joshua to let the Canaanites kill each other. But Joshua is a man of integrity. He made a treaty in God's name and will abide by his word. Therefore, Joshua takes his army and sets out for Gibeon. As he does, the Lord says to him, "*Do not fear them, for I have given them into your hands. Not a man of them shall stand before you*" (10:7–8b).

People of God are always people of integrity. God will not be part of anything deceitful or wrong in anyway. People of integrity know what truth in Proverbs 10:9?

Because Joshua is a man of integrity, he rightly decides to abide by his word. To maintain your integrity, **abide by your word** and ...

Act on God's promises (10:9–28)

After an all-night march from Gilgal, Joshua makes a surprise attack. The attack catches the Amorites off guard, they panic, and many of them are killed. Others flee from the Israelites. As they flee, the Lord rains down large hailstones, and more *died* because of the *hailstones* than the Israelites *killed with the sword* (10:9–11).

Next, God performs an even greater miracle because Joshua prays for something and God answers. What does Joshua 10:13a tell us?

It appears that instead of twelve hours of sunlight, there were twenty four, because the sun didn't set for *about a whole day* (10:13b). This miracle is difficult to explain away for several reasons. For example, if you were driving along at seventy miles per hour without a seatbelt and your vehicle suddenly stopped, you would go flying through the windshield. The earth rotates on its axis at about 1,000 miles per hour. If it suddenly stopped (which is what would happen if *the sun stood still*), everyone would fly into outer space and there would be devastating tidal waves worldwide.

God may have lengthened the day by tilting the earth, like the summer days in Alaska, known as “the land of the midnight sun.” In Barrow, Alaska’s northernmost village, the sun rises on March 10th and doesn’t totally set for nearly three months. Or, there might have been some refraction of the sun’s rays that gave additional hours of light. Regardless of how God did it, the day was miraculously prolonged. To question this miracle is the result of not knowing who God is. If we know the God of the Bible, we know what truth in the last sentence in Jeremiah 32:17?

Taking advantage of the long day, the Israelites continue in hot pursuit of the enemy to keep them from retreating into their walled cities. Word comes to Joshua that the five kings have been found hiding in a cave. Joshua tells his soldiers to roll large stones against the mouth of the cave and place guards there to keep the kings inside. He will deal with them later. The important thing now is to prevent the armies from returning to their fortified cities (10:16–19).



Later, the five kings are brought to Joshua. Joshua tells his commanders, “*Come near; put your feet upon the necks of these kings*” (10:24). In Joshua’s day, this was a common way of humiliating enemies because it symbolized complete subjection. It was also a way of lifting the morale of troops. This helps us better understand what fact about Christ in Ephesians 1:22a?

Like Joshua, we have a formidable enemy we must battle daily. He is called Satan, the Evil One, and the devil. We can only be successful in the battle if we have integrity. What wonderful promise in Romans 16:20a can we then claim?

Joshua reinforces the act of having his military leaders put their feet on the necks of the kings by saying, “*Do not be afraid or dismayed; be strong and courageous. For thus the LORD will do to all your enemies against whom you fight*” (10:25b–d).

Every victory in the Christian life should help build fearless faith for the next battle. Therefore, we should *be strong and courageous*, or in other words, continue on our “journey into fearless living.”

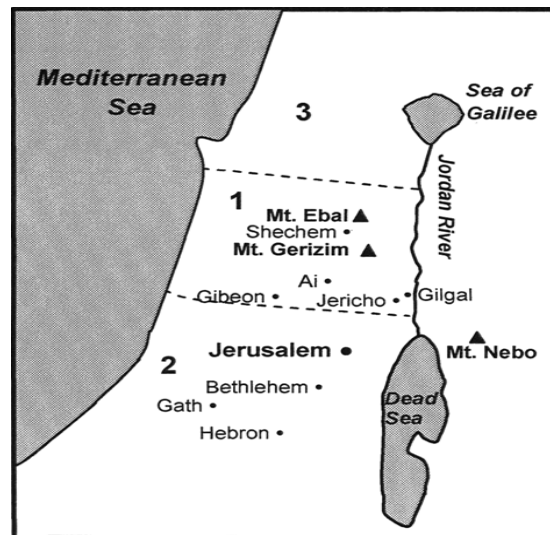
Requirements for **maintaining your integrity** are: **abide by your word, act on God’s promises,** and ...

Acquire a long-term perspective (10:29–12:24)

Up to this point Joshua’s victories have taken place in central Canaan. He has been using the strategy of “divide and conquer.” Their enemies are now divided, so they cannot unite and attack. After defeating the five kings in central Canaan, Joshua and his army advance south.

Joshua takes other key cities in the south, bypassing Jerusalem (10:29–41). For about 400 years, Jerusalem would defy the armies of Israel (Josh. 15:63 & Judg. 1:21). However, when David

becomes king, one of his first acts is to conquer Jerusalem and set it up as the capital of his kingdom (2 Sam. 5:6–7).



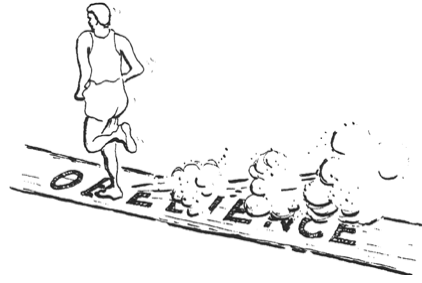
The reason for all of Israel's success is found in Joshua 10:42b. What is it?

People of integrity always give God the glory for any achievement or success. Our hands, feet, talents, and intellect all come from God. So, if we have integrity, we will give Him the credit He deserves for our successes.

After winning the southern campaign, Joshua faces the combined forces of the north. They come out against him with horses and chariots that cover the landscape like sand on the seashore (11:4). According to the Jewish historian Josephus, the combined armies had 300,000 foot soldiers, 10,000 horsemen, and 20,000 chariots (Josephus 5:1:18).

The Lord tells Joshua not to be afraid of them because the next day they will be dead men. The Lord also tells him the Israelites will “*hamstring their horses and burn their chariots with fire*” (11:6). Hamstringing involved cutting the hamstring tendons of the horses' legs. Joshua did just as the Lord commanded—hamstringing the horses and burning the chariots (11:9). Therefore, their enemies could never use them against them, and Israel could not trust in them. Joshua and the Israelites are an example of Psalm 20:7. Write it below:

As a result, *Joshua took the whole land ... And the land had rest from war* (11:23). There are still patches of resistance and undefeated cities, such as Jerusalem. However, all the major enemies and threats have been defeated. Therefore, there is no more need for combined Israelite tribal forces. God expects individual tribes to take the remaining towns.



Chapter twelve is a review. Verses 1–6 list the kings Moses defeated, and verses 7–24 list the kings Joshua defeated. It took several years to capture all of the Promised Land. We need to remember this when we expect quick changes or victories in our lives. As we travel on our journey with God, **fearless living** demands a lifetime of integrity. On this “journey into fearless living,” what must you be able to say with Job (Job 27:5b)?

To maintain your integrity, **abide by your word, act on God’s promises, and acquire a long-term perspective.**

MONTH OF NOVEMBER
Finishing Life Well (Joshua 13–14)



It has been said the most difficult instrument to play in life is “second fiddle.” The phrase “play second fiddle” means taking a subordinate role. It alludes to the part of second fiddle, or violin, in an orchestra. One of the most difficult things in life is faithfully doing your best when someone else gets the attention and credit. No one played “second fiddle” throughout his life better than Joshua’s faithful friend Caleb.

Avoid envy

Little is known about Caleb, but what we do know indicates he was equal to Joshua in his unwavering commitment to the Lord. Caleb was of the tribe of Judah (Num. 13:6). We are introduced to him at the Israelites’ first opportunity to enter the Promised Land, prior to the wilderness wanderings. Twelve spies, including Joshua and Caleb, return from scouting out the land. Ten of the spies give a very gloomy report about strong armies and large fortified cities (Num. 13:28). After their report discourages the people, what does Caleb say to quiet the Israelites (Numbers 13:30)?

Caleb spoke up in faith. Although Joshua certainly agreed, Caleb took the lead in encouraging the people. Because of their faith, only Caleb and Joshua from the original 600,000 men who left Egypt (Ex 12:37) were allowed to enter the Promised Land. The rest died during the wilderness wanderings. When Joshua was chosen by God as Moses’ successor, Caleb did everything he could to support him, without the slightest hint of envy or selfish ambition. What awesome warning does James 3:16 give about envy or jealousy?



The word translated *jealousy* (ZĒLOS, zay’-los) can also be translated “envy.” Envy wants what someone else has and causes us to be blind to our own blessings. It is the worst of all evils because it leads to the worst of all sins. Just before he orders Jesus to be crucified, Pilate understands something that illustrates this truth. What does Mark 15:10 tell us?

We are all tempted to *envy* when we see someone else receive more attention and success than we do. God often tests our devotion to Him by seeing how we react when He blesses others.

To finish life well, **avoid envy** and ...

Align with God's promises (13:1–14:15)

At the end of chapter twelve not all the land is conquered, but the main military threats have been defeated throughout the land. Joshua is now *old and advanced in years* (13:1a).

Joshua is probably in his eighties and later dies at 110 (24:29). The Lord tells him there is still much land to be taken. He then gives Joshua instructions not only for taking the rest of the land but also for dividing the land west of Jordan among the nine tribes and half the tribe of Manasseh. God also commands that the other half of Manasseh and the tribes of Reuben and Gad receive the land they requested on the east side of Jordan (13:8–33). The tribe of Levi receives no tribal land but is given towns to live in with pasturelands for their livestock (21:2). Therefore, the Levites are scattered among the tribes so they can better serve as teachers and priests.

As Joshua is finishing the task of dividing the inheritance, his longtime, loyal friend comes to him. Caleb suffered with Joshua forty years in the wilderness and faithfully fought to capture the Promised Land. Caleb now reminds Joshua of a promise Moses made to him more than forty years earlier. Caleb's request contains a brief, moving autobiography of his life. Caleb reveals his unwavering faith when he says to Joshua, "*I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh-barnea to spy out the land, and I brought him word again as it was in my heart. ⁸But my brothers who went up with me made the heart of the people melt*" (14:7–8a). Then, what does Caleb honestly say in Joshua 14:8b?

Faithful Caleb has never wavered in trusting God's promises and aligning himself with them. He now reminds Joshua of what Moses swore to him on that day: "*Surely the land on which your foot has trodden shall be an inheritance for you and your children forever, because you have wholly followed the LORD my God*" (14:9).

Caleb continues by telling Joshua the Lord has kept him alive for forty-five years since that time, while Israel wandered in the wilderness, and now he is eighty-five years old. Yet, he confidently says, "*I am still as strong today as I was in the day that Moses sent me.*" Therefore, he respectfully asks Joshua to give him the *hill country* the Lord promised him (14:10–12a). Caleb is asking for the *hill country*, that is still inhabited by *the Anakim* (an'-uh-kims). These giants were part of the Nephilim (nef'-uh-lim), who the ten spies said made the Israelites look like *grasshoppers* in comparison (Num. 13:33). Caleb also knows the land promised him has great fortified cities and will be very difficult to take (14:12b–c). However, what does he say in Joshua 14:12c?

Joshua blesses Caleb and gives him the *hill country* that includes the city of Hebron (14:13), which was about twenty miles south of Jerusalem. It would have been easy for this great, faithful warrior of the Lord to ask for some of the choice areas of land that had already been conquered where he could settle down and spend his remaining years in peace. Instead, he asks for the area that struck terror in the hearts of the ten spies.



The *hill country* had a nearby city named Gath. We do not know its exact location. However, centuries later there was a man from Gath named Goliath. Through him we discover why the Israelites were terrified of *the Anakim*. How does 1 Samuel 17:4 describe *Goliath of Gath*?

A cubit is the distance from your elbow to the tip of your middle finger (about eighteen inches). A *span* is half a cubit, or the distance from the tip of your thumb to the tip of your little finger when your fingers are fully extended (about nine inches). Therefore, Goliath was about nine feet, nine inches tall.

To finish life well, **avoid envy**, **align with God's promises**, and ...

Ask and act with the right motive

Why did Caleb want the *hill country* that contained Hebron? Probably because Hebron played an important part in the lives of Israel's patriarchs. Abraham buried his beloved wife Sarah in a cave east of Hebron (Gen. 23:19). Later, Abraham was buried there, as well as Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, Leah, and eventually Joseph, who commanded his bones be brought out of Egypt when the Israelites left (Gen. 25:8–10; 49:30–31 & 50:12–13). It was for spiritual, not selfish, reasons Caleb wanted the hill country that included Hebron.

To finish life well, we must always ask for things in prayer with the right motives. When David was giving his last words to his son Solomon, he told him to *serve the Lord with a whole heart and with a willing mind* (1 Chron. 28:9b–c). Then, what does David tell Solomon (28:9d)?

The Hebrew word translated *plan*, or “imagination,” could be translated “motives.” This means God not only knows **what** we do but **why** we do it. He knows whether our church attendance, giving, and other good things are for the right reason or are only hypocritical acts.



Because Caleb’s motives were always pure, he finished his life well. Like Paul, what could Caleb have honestly said, as recorded in 2 Timothy 4:7?

To finish your life well, **avoid envy, align with God’s promises, and ask and act with the right motive.**

MONTH OF DECEMBER -PART 1

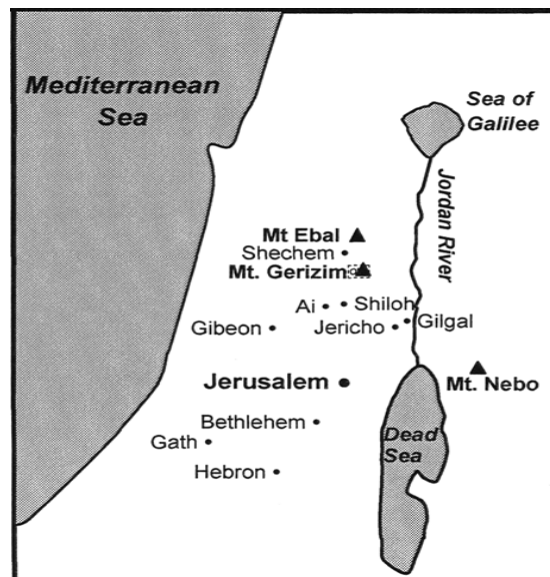
Finding Refuge (Joshua 20:1–9)



Chapter twenty is about the cities of refuge. Putting this chapter into context, we should note that chapters fifteen through nineteen detail the division of the Promised Land among the twelve tribes. The tabernacle, also called the tent of meeting, was moved from Gilgal to Shiloh, in the center of the land, making it easier for people to worship and offer sacrifices (18:1 & 8) [see map below]. The tabernacle remained in Shiloh for 300 years, until the time of David.

Soon after Moses presented the Ten Commandments to the people, he was told to explain the cities of refuge. As part of the Law, the Lord said to Moses: “*Whoever strikes a man so that he dies shall be put to death*” (Ex 21:12). However, in Exodus 21:13, what does God tell Moses concerning the unintentional taking of a human life?

God distinguishes between premeditated murder and involuntary manslaughter. In ancient times, when a family member was killed, the closest relative or someone appointed by the family was to avenge that death. Therefore, God tells Joshua to designate *cities of refuge*, as He instructed Moses (Josh. 20:2).



The *cities of refuge* were set up so anyone who killed another person accidentally could flee there and be safe from avenging relatives (20:3). Deuteronomy 19:5 gives an example of the purpose of these cities. Suppose someone goes with his neighbor to cut wood, and as he swings the axe to cut down a tree, the axe head flies off the handle and kills the other person. In that situation, what is the slayer allowed to do, according to the last phrase of Deuteronomy 19:5?

Since these cities are discussed in four books of the Old Testament (Ex 21:12–13; Num. 35:6–34; Deut. 19:1–14; & Josh. 20:1–9), they are of great importance. God clearly wants to impress upon the Israelites the sanctity of human life. Taking a person's life, even unintentionally, is a very serious matter.

There were six *cities of refuge*, three on each side of the Jordan River (Num. 35:6). These cities typify Christ, to whom we may flee from the pursuit of the avenging Law. What does the Law say (Romans 6:23a)?

The Israelites were to make the *cities of refuge* available to all who needed them. In the same way, we must make Christ available to everyone, since all people are condemned to death by the Law. These *cities of refuge* picture **three** principles about the salvation offered in Christ. First is ...

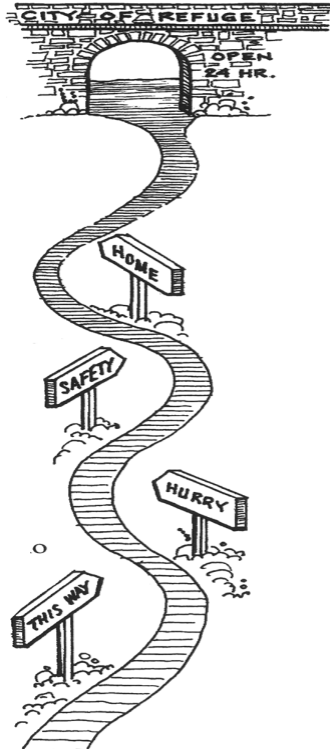
The Accessibility of Salvation (20:4–6)

The Israelites were to survey the land and divide it into *three parts* with a city of refuge in each section. Then, anyone who accidentally killed someone could *flee* to one of them (Deut. 19:3). The *cities of refuge* were to be equally spaced throughout the land, so they were accessible to everyone in the Promised Land.

The slayer would flee to the cities without delay and at the gate of the city *explain his case to the elders of that city*. If the elders decided the death was accidental and without malice, they had to allow him to enter the city and live with them. He was to live there until the death of the current high priest, and then he could return home in safety (Josh. 20:4–6). The death of the high priest seems to serve as a statute of limitations, ending the fugitive's confinement in a city of refuge.

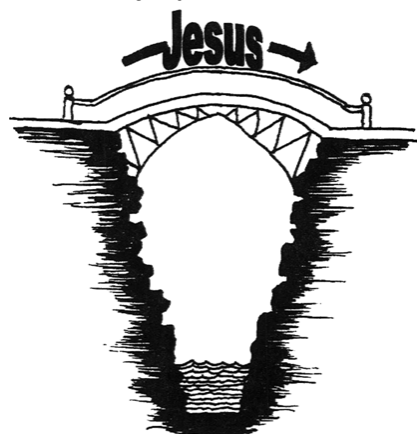
According to Jewish tradition, the roads to these cities were to be kept in good repair, and every crossroad was to have signs marked "Refuge," directing the way. Also, to make the route as short as possible, bridges were to be built over ravines and creeks.

This great example teaches us to do all we can to make Christ accessible to the lost. Every Christian should be a "sign" pointing the lost to our spiritual City of Refuge, Jesus Christ. How does 1 Peter 3:15b remind us of this responsibility?



We should be spiritual “sign posts,” always ready to direct anyone who asks us about the way from the penalty of sin to refuge in Christ. At the very least, every Christian should be able to share the plan of salvation, such as the Roman Road (Rom. 3:23; 6:23 & 10:9–10). This is the simple method the pastor used to lead me to the Lord.

We should also build bridges. When one man was asked about how his friend led him to Christ, he said, “He built a bridge from his heart to mine, and Jesus walked across.” That’s one reason God gives us what command in Galatians 6:10?



The best way to build bridges is through relationships. The *cities of refuge* reveal the **accessibility** and ...

The Impartiality of Salvation (20:7–9)

Verses 7–8 list the six cities—three on each side of the Jordan River. These *cities of refuge* show **impartiality** because they were available to all the people of Israel, as well as the *stranger*, or foreigner, living among them. Anyone who accidentally killed a person could take refuge there and be safe from *the avenger of blood*, prior to standing trial before the local *congregation*, or assembly (20:9). God consistently commands that strangers and aliens be treated the same as the people of Israel. This confirms what truth about God in Romans 2:11?

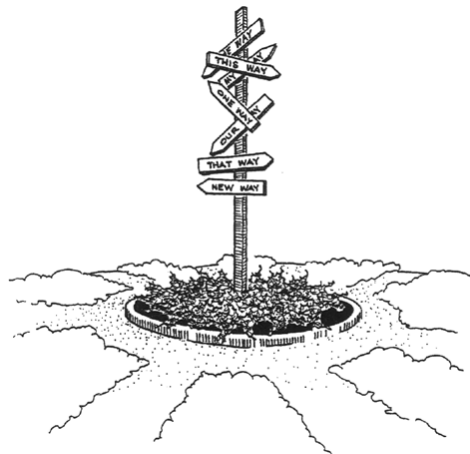
We live in a culture that is becoming more and more prejudiced against aliens. Yes, our laws concerning illegal aliens should be enforced, but we must also obey what command in Leviticus 19:34a–b?

It is a serious matter to be prejudiced against anyone—Hispanics, African Americans, Caucasians, Native Americans, people of a lower or higher economic group—anyone (Jas. 2:9). God is impartial and so is the salvation He offers in Christ Jesus. Therefore, anyone can come to Him and find refuge. If there is the slightest tugging in your heart to get right with God, it is God calling you to Himself. That's really good news, but it gets even better. What does Jesus promise in John 6:37?

The *cities of refuge* reveal the **accessibility, impartiality**, and ...

The Exclusivity of Salvation

If a slayer refused to flee to a city of refuge, there was no other provision whereby he could be saved. Even if he left the safety of the city of refuge, the avenger could legally kill him (Num. 35:26–27). In the same way, there is only one place of refuge for sinners who are under penalty of death, and that is Jesus Christ. How does Peter declare this to the Sanhedrin in Acts 4:12a?



As Christians, we must never retreat from the clear teaching of God's Word that Jesus is the one and only way to heaven.

The *cities of refuge* reveal **the accessibility, impartiality, and exclusivity of salvation**.

However, not only does this passage in *Joshua* teach us these three principles about our salvation in Christ, but also about the refuge we as believers have in the Lord. This truth can be best summed up as ...

The Reliability of Our Refuge

As Christians, we all have times when we need a place of refuge. A “refuge” is a sheltered or protected place, safe from anything threatening, harmful, or frightening. You may need a reliable refuge from financial fears, health issues, career concerns, etc. During these times, you need to trust what promise in Psalm 46:1?

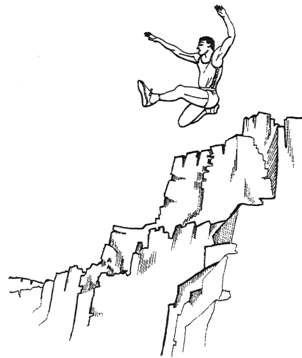
If you are not a Christian ...

the *cities of refuge* picture **three** words that describe salvation in Christ: **accessibility**, **impartiality**, and **exclusivity**.

If you are a Christian in need of a place of refuge from the fears or problems of life ...

one word sums up your refuge in the Lord: **reliability**.

MONTH OF DECEMBER -PART2 Staying On Track Spiritually (Joshua 21–24)



Some of the greatest saints in the Bible stumbled in their faith during their latter years—Noah, Saul, David, and Solomon. However, even though at times Joshua made mistakes, never in his entire life did he intentionally act contrary to the will or word of God.

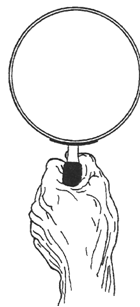
Chapter 21 records the allocation of the Levitical cities. They are decided by lot and scattered throughout the land (21:1–4). The Lord had commanded through Moses that forty-eight cities, including the six cities of refuge, be assigned to the Levites (Num. 35:6). As already mentioned, scattering the Levites throughout the land would facilitate fulfilling their duties as priests and teachers of the Law. What words of encouragement conclude the chapter (Joshua 21:45)

The final three chapters of *Joshua* reveals **three** requirements for **staying on track spiritually ...**

Refrain from hasty reactions (22:1–34)

In chapter 22, after keeping their promise to help the other tribes conquer the Promised Land, the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh return to the land they requested on the east side of the Jordan River. They will now be separated from the other tribes and the tabernacle that is now at Shiloh. Therefore, Joshua tells them to be very careful to obey all the Lord's commands, and to love and remain faithful to Him (22:5a–c). Then, what does Joshua tell them in the last phrase of Joshua 22:5?

Upon their return to the east side of Jordan, they build *an altar of imposing size* (22:10). There could only be one tabernacle and one altar, and they were at Shiloh. So, the tribes on the west side of the Jordan gather at Shiloh to make war against the tribes on the east (22:11–12). However, to their credit, before attacking, the Israelites on the west side send a delegation offering to let their fellow Israelites come over to *the LORD's land* where *the altar* and *the LORD's tabernacle* are located (22:19). Joshua and the Israelites on the west of Jordan **refrain from hasty reactions**. They are simply following God's instructions for dealing with people worshipping other gods in the land (Deut. 13:13). They obeyed what command that we should also follow when there is a possible misunderstanding (Deuteronomy 13:14a)?



A lot of hurt feelings and confusion could be avoided if only we would obey this command. It is the only way to clear up any misunderstanding. Their inquiry averted a tremendous disaster because the two and a half tribes would have been slaughtered.

The tribes on the east side explain that the altar was built to teach their future generations to reverence *the LORD* since the Jordan River cuts them off from the real altar and tabernacle. They also explain the altar was not built for *burnt offering* or *sacrifice*. It was built to *be a witness* for future *generations* and that the children of the Israelites on the west of Jordan would not say to the children on the east, *Ye have no part in the LORD*. When the western tribes learn it was not a second altar to offer sacrifices or a pagan altar, unity is restored (22:25–34).

To stay on track spiritually, **refrain from hasty reactions** and ...

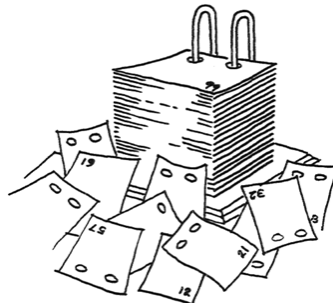
Remember the Lord's blessings (23:1–16)

Chapters 23 and 24 record Joshua's last two addresses to his people. Knowing his days are numbered, Joshua assembles all the leaders of the tribes. He reminds them of how God has given them the land by fighting for them just as He promised (23:1–5). Then, Joshua exhorts his people, whom he has led faithfully for forty years, to be *courageous* and “*do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses*” (23:6a). What does Joshua 23:6b record he also tells them?

He then tells the Israelites not to mix with the pagan nations or even *mention* the names of their gods. He reminds them not to fear because the Lord will fight for them as He has promised. He also tells them, *Be very careful, therefore, to love the LORD your God*” (23:7–11).

Joshua next gives a solemn warning for them not to turn to pagan gods or intermarry with non-believers. He explains that pagans will be a *snare and a trap* for them, as well as a whip, or “*scourge*,” on their sides and *thorns* in their eyes. They will cause the Israelites to *perish* from the *good land* the Lord has given them (23:12–13).

Joshua again reminds his people he will soon go *the way of all the earth*. Then, he tells them something about God's promises they know from experience in their *hearts* and *souls* (23:14a–b). What is it (23:14d)?



Joshua knows the Israelites must remember the Lord's blessing if they are to continue being faithful. One great problem in the Christian life is our short memories. The devil cannot lead us into sin unless he makes us forget the Lord's blessings in our lives. The major contributing factor to all sin is forgetting God's blessing. That's why we have what exhortation in Psalm 103:2?

We can't remember them all, but we must not forget them all either. However, when problems come, we tend to focus just on our problems and forget all the Lord's blessings.

Joshua ends his address with another solemn warning. He reminds the people, if they break their covenant with the Lord by worshipping and serving other gods, the Lord's anger will be *kindled* against them, and they will vanish from the *good land* the Lord has given them (23:16). Future generations would find out God always means what He says.

The Lord not only keeps all His promises about blessings but also about punishment. The Evil One will try to convince us that we are the grand exceptions, but there are no exceptions. We cannot

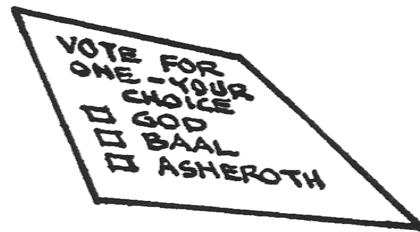
sin without consequence. Our greatest protection against falling into sin and suffering the consequences is remembering God's blessings.

To stay on track spiritually, **refrain from hasty reactions, remember the Lord's blessings**, and ...

Recommit regularly (24:1–33)

For his final address Joshua gathers the leaders of Israel to Shechem. This is an important place for Joshua's farewell speech. More than five hundred years earlier God had appeared to Abraham at Shechem and promised him that his descendants would receive that land (Gen. 12:6–7).

To make it clear the Lord is speaking through him, Joshua says "*Thus says the LORD*" (24:2b). Through Joshua, the Lord then reviews His past blessings through Abraham, the deliverance from Egypt, the miracles at the Red Sea, the miraculous crossing of the Jordan River, the victory at Jericho, His victories over their enemies, and the fruits of the land (24:4–12). The Lord sums it all up by saying he has given them *a land* on which they have not labored and *cities* they have not built in which to live. The Lord also reminds them that they eat of *vineyards* and *olive* groves they did not plant (24:13). Because of this, what does Joshua tell them in verse 14a?



Joshua is leading his people to recommit themselves to the Lord. Therefore, he tells them if they refuse to *serve the LORD*, then they must *choose* today whom they *will serve*. They can choose *the gods* of their ancestors (before Abraham) who lived beyond *the river* Euphrates. Or, they can choose *the gods of the Amorites* in whose land they are now living (24:15). Joshua ends his appeal with what famous words in the last sentence of Joshua 24:15?

The people must personally decide if they will **recommit** themselves to serving the Lord who has never broken a promise, who has proved His faithfulness over and over, and who has given them the Promised Land with all its immense blessings. They can choose to serve Him or the pagan gods of the Canaanites.

On a daily basis, we must decide for ourselves whom we will serve—to whom or to what we will commit our lives. We cannot live today on the commitments of the past. As we serve Him, we should also practice what principle in Psalm 100:2a?

When asked to do something at Bible study or church, don't say, "Well, if you can't get anyone else, I guess I'll do it." When you have the opportunity to serve the Lord, you should do it with what? *Gladness*!

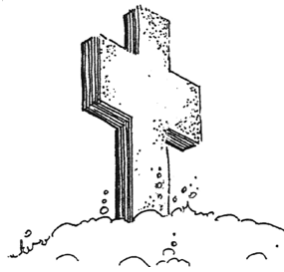
It is important to note the spirituality and humility of Joshua's final words. As he recounts the tremendous victories and blessings of the Lord in the Promised Land, Joshua never mentions

himself. As tempting and true as it is, Joshua never exalts himself, though he is perhaps the most faithful leader Israel will ever have. He never refers to a single accomplishment or contribution of his own. He is a wonderful example of what words of Jesus in Matthew 23:12?

As a result of Joshua's address, the people **recommit** themselves to serving and obeying the Lord. Finally, *after these things* we read that *Joshua the son of Nun* dies at one hundred ten years old (24:29). How does this verse describe Joshua?

That is Joshua's epitaph. When your epitaph is written, what will it say? In the following sentence, put your name in the first blank and what you believe should be in the last blank, if you were to die today:

_____, the servant of _____ (money, career, education, fame,
or whatever would be the truth)



Joshua died about 1365 B.C. The name Joshua means “savior” or “deliverer.” Thirteen hundred years later God sent the angel Gabriel with a message to an unmarried woman we call the Virgin Mary. Gabriel tells Mary she will conceive and bear a son (Lk 1:31a–b). What does the angel tell her to name her son (Luke 1:31c)?

This is the Greek form of the Hebrew name “Joshua.” So, our Savior’s real name is “Joshua.” Like Joshua, Jesus is a deliverer and conqueror. However, Jesus didn’t come to take possession of a piece of land; He wants to take possession of your life and be your Lord.

Like Joshua, if you have a successful “journey into fearless living,” what will you hear the Lord say one day (Matthew 25:21b)?

Requirements for **staying on track spiritually** are:

refrain from hasty reactions,
remember the Lord’s blessings, and
recommit regularly.