

Adult
Sabbath School
Bible Study Guide
Oct | Nov | Dec 2025

Lessons of Faith from JOSHUA



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Lessons About Faith From Joshua

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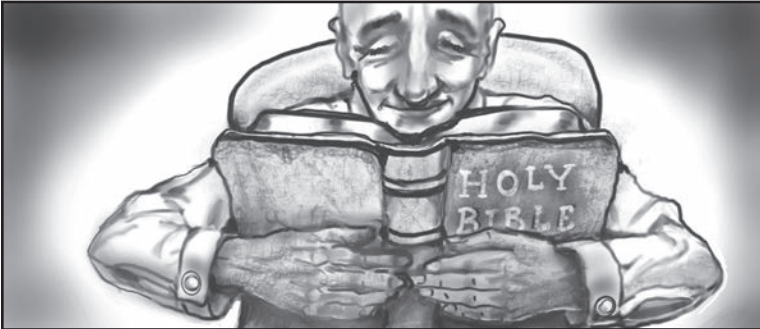
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Introduction



Second Chances: The Book of Joshua

The book of Joshua starts with a change in Israel's leadership. Moses is dead. Now Joshua is the new leader. The book also tells the story about how Israel enters the Promised Land. At the end of the book, Israel is settled in the land.

After 40 years in the desert, Joshua must do what Moses never did. Joshua must lead Israel across the Jordan River and into the land of Canaan. God made a promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob many years before to give them this land.

The Lord says to Joshua, " 'My servant Moses is dead. Now you and all these people must go across the Jordan River. You must go into the land I am giving to the Israelites' " (Joshua 1:2, ERV).

Joshua will not do this work alone. The Lord will help Him. The Lord wanted to bring His people into the Promised Land 40 years earlier. But the Israelites didn't have faith in God's promises. The people broke their agreement with God. So, they were forced to wander in the desert for 40 years.

During those 40 years, Israel often fought against God. Every adult person in Israel who walked across the Red Sea died in the desert. Caleb and Joshua were the only adults in Israel from that time who entered the Promised Land. Four of Moses' five books tell the story about what happened to the Israelites as they wandered in the desert for 40 years. The children of the Israelites who died in the desert are now grown. They are ready to win the Promised Land. Joshua also is ready to lead these Israelites into the Promised Land.

"Then Moses called [sent for] Joshua. All the Israelites watched while Moses said to Joshua, 'Be strong and brave. You will lead these people into the land that the LORD promised to give to their ancestors. You will help the Israelites take [win] that land and divide it among [between] them. The LORD will lead you. He himself is with you. He will not fail you or leave you. Don't worry. Don't be afraid!' " (Deuteronomy 31:7, 8, ERV).

Moses is talking about the promises that God made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

hundreds of years ago. Now God is about to keep those promises. The Israelites are excited. They were homeless for so long. Now God will give them a new beginning. God saved the Israelites from slavery. So, the people can trust Him to keep His promises about the land.

“The book of Joshua was written to tell the story about how Israel entered the Promised Land and won it. The book of Joshua also tells how Joshua divided the land and gave it to the different family groups of Israel. The message of the book of Joshua is that God’s people can trust Him. That’s because He kept His promise about the land to Abraham and to His people (Joshua 21:43–45).”—*Andrews Bible Commentary* (Andrews University Press, 2020), page 365, adapted.

***The message
of the book of
Joshua is that
God’s people
can trust Him.***

This quarter, we will discover that we have many of the same problems today that Joshua had in his time. How did Joshua solve these problems? What lessons can we learn from him? Joshua’s example will help us to trust in God’s promises, just as he did. When we trust in God, He will give us success.

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How to Succeed



SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 27

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Deuteronomy 18:15–22; Joshua 1; Hebrews 6:17, 18; Genesis 24:40; Isaiah 53:10.

MEMORY VERSE: “Be strong and brave. Be sure to obey all the teachings my servant Moses gave you. If you follow them [the teachings] exactly, you will be successful [have success] in everything you do” (Joshua 1:7, ICB).



Mr. Zander wanted his students to understand the A was a gift. This gift could teach them about success.

BENJAMIN ZANDER was the music director for a famous band of musicians in Boston. Zander also taught a music class. Zander noticed that his students got nervous whenever they played for their teachers. Zander didn't want them to feel afraid. So, Zander made a special announcement on the first day of class. Everybody in the class would get an “A.” Zander didn't expect his students to earn the A. Zander wanted his students to understand the A was a gift. This gift could teach them about success. The A showed the students what was possible for them to do as musicians.

The book of Joshua teaches us about doing new things. Moses was Israel's leader for 40 years. But now Moses was part of Israel's past. The journey in the desert was over. A new group of Israelites was ready to enter the Promised Land. The land was God's gift to Israel. The Israelites couldn't earn this gift. God gave the Israelites the land to teach them how to live. God gave them this gift to show them what was possible for them to do, with His help.

Let's study the way God helped His people start a brand new life. God can do the same thing for us, too.

**A NEW MOSES (Deuteronomy 18:15–22
and Joshua 1:1–9)**

The book of Joshua starts with a promise about what will happen after Moses dies. Why is this promise so important? Read Deuteronomy 18:15–22 and Joshua 1:1–9 for the answer.

Moses died. Then God chose a new leader, Joshua. When we compare Joshua with Moses, we see they are alike in many ways. God told both men they would lead their people into the Promised Land. The Lord told Joshua: “ ‘I promised Moses I would give you this land. So I will give you every place you go in the land’ ” (Joshua 1:3, ICB). Joshua will finish the work that Moses started. Joshua really was a new Moses.

Read Exodus 33:11; Numbers 14:6, 30, 38; Numbers 27:18; Numbers 32:12; Deuteronomy 1:38; Deuteronomy 31:23; and Deuteronomy 34:9. What do these verses tell us about Joshua?



Joshua must serve and obey the Lord his whole life before he is named “the LORD’s servant” (Joshua 24:29, ERV).

Yes, Moses is dead. But his name is written ten times in the first chapter of the book of Joshua. Joshua’s name is written only four times. Moses is named “the LORD’s servant” (Joshua 1:1, ERV). But Joshua is named “Moses’ helper” in this same verse. Joshua must serve and obey the Lord his whole life before he is named “the LORD’s servant” (Joshua 24:29, ERV).

Joshua 1 shows us a change in leadership from Moses to Joshua. But we must remember that the most important leader is the Lord Himself. The book of Joshua starts with the Lord’s words. The Lord guides His people in the whole book. The Lord is the real leader of Israel.

In every age of history, the Lord chose men and women to lead His people. At the same time, why must we remember who the real, invisible leader of the church is?

CROSS! TAKE! DIVIDE! SERVE! (Joshua 1)

Read Joshua 1. What can we learn from this first chapter about the form of the book of Joshua? How is the book of Joshua put together? What are its different parts?



The things God does for Israel are shown in four action words: “cross,” “take,” “divide,” and “serve.”

Joshua 1 introduces the whole book of Joshua. The book of Joshua has four parts. The four parts include: (1) crossing the Jordan River; (2) winning the land (Joshua 1:10, 11); (3) dividing the land (Joshua 1:12–15); and (4) serving and obeying the Lord. The first chapter of Joshua also includes four sermons. Each sermon helps us understand one of the four parts of the book.

The book of Joshua shows us God’s actions for His people. God always takes the lead or makes the first move. In each action, God gives a special task to Joshua. Each task is about winning the Promised Land. Also, the book of Joshua talks about each task after Joshua finishes it.

In the end, God keeps all His promises about giving the Promised Land to His people. From then on, the Israelites are responsible for keeping the land. They can do this only with faith and obedience.

The things God does for Israel are shown in four action words: “cross,” “take,” “divide,” and “serve.” The people must obey and serve the Lord. Again, the book of Joshua has four parts. The action words below help us understand the most important idea in each part:

1. Cross (Joshua 1:1–5:12)
2. Take (Joshua 5:13–12:24)
3. Divide (Joshua 13:1–21:45)
4. Serve (Joshua 22:1–24:33)

As we see, the four parts of the book of Joshua show us its important message. God works **for** His people. But He also works **with** His people. The people must believe and obey. They must work with God if they expect God to help them. God does so much for us. He does many things for us that we can’t do for ourselves. So, He asks us to serve Him. We must obey Him and do what He commands us to do. The picture of God’s end-time people in Revelation 14:12 teaches us the same idea. We must have faith in what God does for us. Faith leads to obedience.

Think about some of the promises in the Bible that are most precious to you. What do you need to do to make these promises real in your life?

GOD'S PROMISE TO HIS PEOPLE (Joshua 1:4–6)

In Joshua 1:2, the Lord tells Joshua that He is giving the land to the Israelites. But verse 3 (NKJV) says that God already gave them the land. How can that be?!

The land was a gift from the Lord. The Lord was the real Owner. In Joshua 1:2, 3, the word for “give” has two different meanings. The first meaning shows us that God is giving the land to His people. The Israelites already won some land before they came to the Jordan River. But most of the Promised Land didn't belong to them.

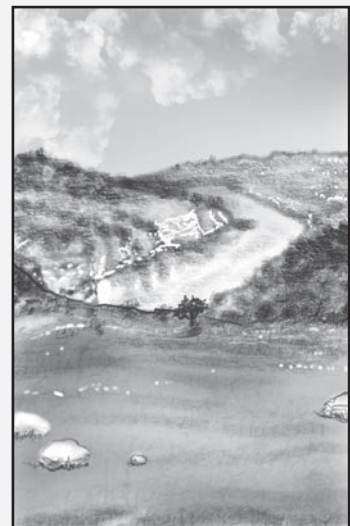
In Joshua 1:3, the word “give” is used to mean that God **already gave** the land to Israel. The things God promises in the Bible are sure and true. So, we can trust that we have them now, even before we get them.

In Joshua 1:3, the words “you” and “your” mean both Joshua and the people. So, God gives His promise not just to Joshua. God makes His promise to everyone in Israel.

Also, the Hebrew word “kol” is used many times. “Kol” can be translated as “all” or “every,” as we see in chapter 1. This word helps us to understand that God, Joshua, and the people must be in perfect agreement. They must be joined together in their hearts and minds as one people. Then God can help them fight for the Promised Land.

Read Joshua 1:4–6 and Hebrews 6:17, 18. At the beginning of Joshua 1, the Promised Land was only a promise. But in the opening verses, God says the land is more than that. The Promised Land is His gift to Israel. When people die, they often leave their money, property, or land to their children. As God's children, Israel is getting the Promised Land from God. This gift makes Israel God's special heirs. An heir is someone who gets the money, property, or land of someone who dies. God's riches include more than money or land. His riches include His promises. How are we the “heirs” of God's promises?

We can trust God's promises to happen because He says He will be with us. Israel needed God to be with them so that they could succeed. Without God, Israel would have been just another country, with nothing to show they were special (Exodus 33:12-16). Joshua needed God to be with Him to succeed, too. Nothing today has changed. We need God's help to succeed. That's why Jesus made us a special promise in Matthew 28:20.



**As God's children,
Israel is getting
the Promised Land
from God.**

BE STRONG! (Joshua 1:7–9)

Why did the Lord need to tell Joshua two times to be strong and courageous? Read Joshua 1:7–9 for the answer.



Because the Lord promised to be with Joshua, Joshua was not afraid.

God gives Joshua a hard task to do. The Lord doesn't want Joshua to be afraid to do this task. The walls of the cities in Canaan look as if they can't be broken. The people in the land are trained to fight. The Israelites aren't fighters. They don't have any war machines to break down the city walls. History tells us that Egypt couldn't take control of Canaan. At that time, Egypt was the most powerful country on earth.

God wants Joshua to be strong and courageous in war. But the Lord's command to Joshua is about more than being brave in battle. The Israelites will need courage and strength to stay loyal to God's law and its rules. These laws and rules were part of Israel's special agreement or relationship with God.

Today, we may not need to fight in war. At the same time, how may God's words in Joshua 1:7–9 give us courage and spiritual strength in hard times? Also, read Ephesians 6:10–18 to help answer the question.

Today, as Christians, we must help God finish His work on earth. We may have many hard times ahead, the same as Joshua did. As we do God's work, we must fight against our own sins and against the devil. Jesus promises us that He will be with us in this fight: " 'You can be sure that I am always with you, to the very end' " of time (Matthew 28:20, NIV). Because the Lord promised to be with Joshua, Joshua was not afraid. God's promise to be with us should be enough to remove our fears, doubts, and worries today, too.

We must get to know the Lord very well. When we know Him, we will trust in Him and His promises to us. More than anything else, we need a personal relationship with Him.

Joshua stayed loyal to God and Bible truth. How can we stay loyal to Bible truth that isn't popular to follow or so easy to obey?

GROWTH AND SUCCESS (Genesis 24:40)

Read Joshua 1:7–9, along with Genesis 24:40; Isaiah 53:10; and Psalm 1:1–3. What do these verses teach us about growth and success?

The Hebrew word “saka” is written as “success” in the English language in Joshua 1:8, NIV. “Saka” is success that comes from plans that turn out well. “Saka” also can mean things that happen in your favor.

The word “saka” means “to be wise” in the Hebrew language (Joshua 1:8). “Saka” also means “to enjoy success.” But “saka” can mean “to act wisely,” too. “Saka” is used a lot in the books of Job, Proverbs, and Psalms. In these books, the idea of success is closely connected to acting wisely. People who act wisely respect God and obey Bible truth.

So, what do these words tell us about the Bible’s idea of success? Success is about much more than being wealthy. (At the same time, success may include riches.) Bible success includes spiritual truth and wisdom. We see this Bible truth in everything God made and in His law.

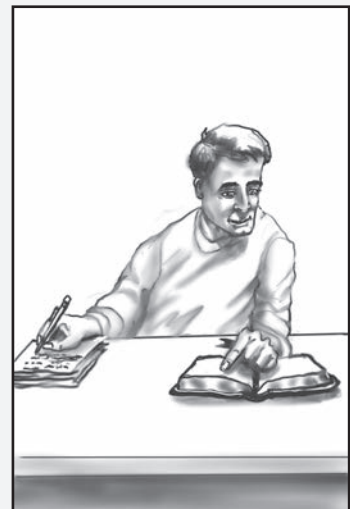
So, we must trust in God’s promises. God promises to save us with His mercy when we believe in Him. We also must obey God. God’s saving mercy and our obedience are not against each other. They are part of God’s plan to save us.

Read Romans 3:31. What does this verse say about the connection between law and faith?

Law and faith always work together. So, we must not think that if we believe that Jesus saves us, we don’t need to obey His law. We must understand that the law is important. Then we will understand the part that obedience has in God’s saving plan. We also will understand that God’s “law” and “mercy” work together.

The writers of the Old Testament respected God’s law. The law filled them with joy (Psalm 1:2; Psalm 119:70, 77, 174). The law helps us see our sin (Romans 7:7). The law also helps us understand that we need Jesus very much (Galatians 3:24).

God helps us to keep His law. But why will we always continue to need Jesus’ holy life to cover us, the same as clothes?



Bible success includes spiritual truth and wisdom.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “Read Ellen G. White, “Crossing the Jordan,” pages 481, 482, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*; “Entering the Promised Land,” page 175, in *The Story of Redemption*.

“All Jesus’ promises and warnings are meant for me. God loved the people on this earth very much. That’s why He gave us His only Son. When I believe in Him, I will not die. I will have everlasting life. The experiences in the Bible are **my** experiences. All the prayers and promises, rules and warnings are mine. . . . With faith, we accept Bible truth. Then Bible truth becomes part of us and our lives. When we accept the Bible into our hearts, its truth will change our thoughts and cause us to grow. Then we will become the same as Jesus in our hearts.”—Ellen G. white, *The Desire of Ages*, pages 390, 391, adapted.

“We are sinners. We can’t save ourselves with our own good behavior. We are saved because of our faith in Jesus. We must think about this idea more often than any other Bible truth.”—Ellen G. White, *Faith and Works*, page 19, adapted.



When we accept the Bible into our hearts, its truth will change our thoughts and cause us to grow.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Joshua’s life and experiences may be very different from ours. At the same time, what Bible truths can we learn from his life?
- ② Discuss the connection between God’s promises and our obedience to Him. How do they work together? What is the danger of saying that God’s mercy is more important than His law? On the other hand, what is the danger of saying that God’s law is more important than His mercy?
- ③ What is the Bible’s idea of success? Where do riches fit in?
- ④ Imagine in your mind how Joshua felt when he became the leader after Moses died. What promise did God give Joshua to help him do his work? Read Joshua 1:5 for the answer.

WORSHIPING A TREE

Sudhakar was a church pioneer at a hospital center in Thailand. Sudhakar noticed the strange tree right away when he arrived at work. Colorful ribbons were tied to the branches. Small statues of stone and wood sat in a circle around the roots. Someone put bananas, apples, and burning perfume sticks in the trunk of the tree. Sudhakar learned that the townspeople believed that a spirit of their ancestors lived in the tree. So, the people worshiped the tree.

The spirit tree stood on land that a kind-hearted woman gave to the Seventh-day Adventist hospital. Sudhakar was confused because he didn't understand why the community people came to the hospital to worship the spirit tree. A pastor explained that the townspeople worshiped the spirit tree long before the lady gave the land to the church.

Sudhakar understood that the people might get upset if the ribbons, statues, fruit, and other objects suddenly disappeared.

But Sudhakar decided to do something about the spirit tree. He prayed about it to God. Sudhakar also became friends with the community leader and other townspeople. Sudhakar invited them all to cooking classes, English classes, and worship services in the new worship center near the spirit tree. Little by little, Sudhakar started to clean up the tree. Sudhakar removed the ribbons, the statues, the bananas, apples, and perfume sticks. The work took Sudhakar about a week.

No one in the community said a word to him about his cleaning up the spirit tree.

Not long after, Sudhakar walked past the tree after he taught a class. A strange voice said his name. The voice came from the tree! The voice offered Sudhakar a lot of money if Sudhakar would obey him.

But Sudhakar didn't want the money. He didn't want anything from the spirit. He wanted the spirit to go away. Sudhakar said, "I command you in Jesus' name to leave and never come back."

Three days later, Sudhakar noticed that the tree was dying. All of its leaves fell off. Four weeks later, the tree was completely dead. Sudhakar chopped the tree down with an ax.

The townspeople were amazed! Soon everyone in the community knew what happened to the tree. When they heard what happened, many people came to the new worship center at the hospital. Sudhakar taught the townspeople to pray only to the God of heaven. Seven people started to attend church at the worship center. Later, they were baptized.

Pray for pioneers the same as Sudhakar who are starting churches in places where people don't know Jesus. Learn more about Global Mission pioneers: <https://bit.ly/GMPioneers>.

INSIDE *Story*



Sudhakar chopped the tree down with an ax.



Sudhakar

Surprised With Mercy



SABBATH—OCTOBER 4

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Joshua 2:1; Joshua 2:2–11; James 2:25; Joshua 2:12–21; Joshua 9:1–20.

MEMORY VERSE: “Rahab was a woman who used her body wrongly for sex to get money. But she believed in God, so she did not die with the people who did not believe in God. This was when the men came to spy out her country. She took them into her house in peace” (Hebrews 11:31, WE).

DO YOU SOMETIMES ASK YOURSELF, “Why did I do **that** again?” Most of us say these words at some time in our lives. For sure, we all make mistakes. So, who doesn't wish for a second chance to make things right?

Israel gets a second chance to enter the Promised Land. Joshua wants Israel to succeed. So, Joshua sends two spies to bring him valuable information about the land. Joshua wants to know how much water the Canaanites have. Are the Canaanites ready for battle? How strong are their city walls? Are they afraid to go to war with Israel?

Some people may think the Israelites didn't need to do anything to get the land. God promised to give it to them, right? But do God's promises mean that He expects us to do nothing? Of course not! Now Israel stands at the border of Canaan for a second time. The last time the Israelites were at the border, they didn't get to enter the Promised Land.

This week, we will look at two of the most interesting stories in the book of Joshua. We will learn how these stories can make our faith strong today.



Joshua sends two spies to bring him valuable information about the land.

SECOND CHANCE (Joshua 2:1)

Why does Joshua send out spies? Read Joshua 2:1, along with Numbers 13:1, 2, 25–28, 33; and Numbers 14:1–12 for the answer.

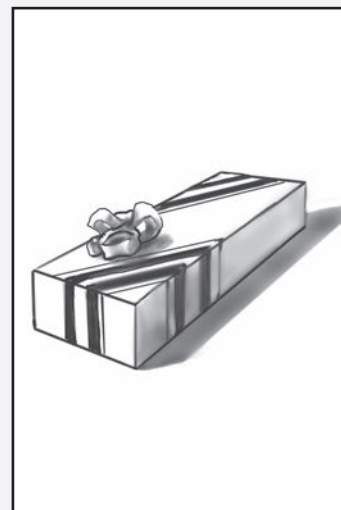
Joshua sent two spies from a place named Acacia Grove (Joshua 2:1, NKJV). Another name for Acacia Grove in the Hebrew language is “Shittim.” Acacia Grove helps us remember two bad experiences that happened to Israel at Shittim in the past.

The first bad experience is another spy story (read Numbers 13). The first story about the ten spies and the second story about the two spies are a lot alike. In both stories, the spies are sent to do special work. In both stories, the spies go into enemy territory. The spies in both stories come back. The spies in both stories report on what they find. In both stories, the Israelites decide what to do because of the information in the report.

The second bad experience at Shittim is one of the worst stories in Israel’s history. Israel broke their agreement with God. The Israelite men had sex with Moabite women and worshiped their gods (Numbers 25:1–3; Numbers 31:16). So, the name “Shittim” helps Israel remember the awful mistakes of the past. Now the Israelites are at Shittim again on the border of the Promised Land. Will the Israelites make the same mistakes they made in the past? Or will they do the right thing so that God can keep His promise to them?

Read John 18:16–18, 25–27 and John 21:15–19. These verses talk about how Jesus gave Peter a second chance. Compare the story about Peter’s second chance with the second chance God gave to Israel. How are the two stories the same?

God is the God of second chances (and much more!). The Bible has another name for the second chance: “mercy.” Mercy is getting a gift that we didn’t do anything to earn. The Bible is full of this teaching about mercy. (Compare Romans 5:2; Ephesians 2:8; and Romans 11:6.) God gives everyone the offer of a fresh start (Titus 2:11–14). Peter himself knew God’s mercy. Peter asked the church to grow in God’s mercy (2 Peter 3:18). The news gets better: we, too, get much more than a second chance, don’t we?



**Mercy is getting a gift
that we didn’t do anything
to earn.**

VALUE IN UNEXPECTED PLACES (Joshua 2:2–11)

Read Joshua 2:2–11; Hebrews 11:31; and James 2:25. What do these verses tell us about Rahab?



Rahab told the spies on her rooftop, “‘The Lord your God is God in heaven above and on earth below’ ” (Joshua 2:11, NLV).

Rahab tells a lie to protect the Israelite spies. If we want to understand Rahab’s story, we must remember that she lived among very evil people. That’s why God finally decided to judge them (Genesis 15:16; Deuteronomy 9:5; Leviticus 18:25–28). Yes, the New Testament praises Rahab’s faith. At the same time, the Bible doesn’t praise everything about Rahab. The Bible never praises her lie.

Hebrews 11:31 honors Rahab for helping the spies. The Bible also honors Rahab for rejecting an evil way of life. James 2:25 honors Rahab for giving lodging to the two Israelite spies. Rahab also is praised for telling the spies how to get home safely. God, in His mercy, saw faith in Rahab. God used her faith to bless Israel. Rahab believed in God and chose to belong to God’s people. Rahab chose Israel’s God over her own gods. God liked Rahab’s courage and her brave faith. God used her to help save other people.

Rahab chose to be on the Lord’s side. Rahab told the spies on her rooftop, “ ‘The Lord your God is God in heaven above and on earth below’ ” (Joshua 2:11, NLV). In Rahab’s religion, people often went on their rooftops to pray to the gods who they thought controlled the skies. So, Rahab’s announcement and where she says it are important. Rahab is announcing that Yahweh is the only God.

Rahab’s words about God’s control are used in other parts of the Bible (Exodus 20:4; Deuteronomy 4:39; Deuteronomy 5:8). All of these verses say that God is the only Person we may worship. Rahab’s words show us that she chose to worship God with her own free will. She believes that God is the only true God. Rahab understands that God is all-powerful. As Judge of the whole earth, God will punish Rahab’s people for their sins.

Rahab understands that she has two choices: She can continue to sin against God. Or she can give her life to Him. If she continues to fight against God, she will be destroyed with her people. So, Rahab chooses to serve the God of Israel. Her choice makes her a shining example to the people in Jericho. The people could have been saved if they followed her example and accepted God’s mercy.

NEW LOYALTY (Joshua 2:12–21)

Read Joshua 2:12–21. Now read Exodus 12:13, 22, 23. How do the verses in Exodus help you understand the agreement between the spies and Rahab?

Rahab's deal with the spies is plain and simple. She wants to exchange life for life and favor for favor. Rahab will save and help the spies. So, she expects them to save and help her family. The word written as "kind" in Joshua 2:12 (ERV) comes from the word "chēsed" in the Hebrew language. "Chēsed" has a rich meaning that is hard to translate with just one word in other languages. "Chēsed" often is used to talk about someone's loyalty to a promise. But "chēsed" also can mean "faith," "mercy," "kind-hearted," and "loving."

Rahab's words help us remember Deuteronomy 7:12. In this verse, the Lord promises to keep giving His "chēsed" or love to Israel: " 'Pay attention to these laws. Obey them carefully. Then the Lord your God will keep his agreement and show his love to you. He promised your ancestors he would' " (Deuteronomy 7:12, ICB).

In Deuteronomy 7, God also commands Israel to destroy the Canaanites completely. What's surprising is that Rahab is a Canaanite. She belongs to the people that God commands Israel to destroy. But Rahab believes in the promises that God gave to the Israelites. So, God saves her.

Rahab's conversation with the spies helps us remember the Passover during the Exodus. The Exodus was the time when God helped the Israelites escape from slavery in Egypt. During the Passover, Moses commanded the Israelites to mark the top and sides of their doors with the blood of a lamb. Then the people must stay inside their houses. The blood protected the people from the destroying angel when he passed over their houses (read Exodus 12:13; also read Exodus 12:22, 23).

"The people showed their faith with their obedience. We also must show our faith in the blood of Jesus. We must understand that we have something to do, too, if we want to be saved. Only Jesus can save us. At the same time, we must stop sinning. We must obey. God will save us with His mercy when we believe in Him. Our good behavior doesn't save us. At the same time, our good behavior shows our faith. Our obedience shows that we believe that Jesus saves us."—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 279, adapted.



Rahab's conversation with the spies helps us remember the Passover during the Exodus.

HARD CHOICES (Joshua 9:1–20)

Read about the Gibeonites in Joshua 9:1–20. Compare this story with the story about Rahab. How are the two stories the same? How are they different?

Joshua 9 and 10 tell us that the Canaanite kings decide to join together against Israel. During this time, the people who live in Gibeon decide to make a peace agreement with Israel.

The Gibeonites want to trick Israel into making the agreement with them. So, the Gibeonites pretend to be leaders from a foreign country. God told Israel to kill everyone who lived in the Promised Land. But God commanded Israel to show mercy first to people who lived outside the Promised Land.

The Gibeonites say many of the same things Rahab said. Both Rahab and the Gibeonites say that Israel's God is very powerful. Both Rahab and the Gibeonites understand that Israel's success comes from God, not from human strength. The Gibeonites are different from other Canaanites. The Gibeonites don't fight against God's plan to give their land to the Israelites. The Gibeonites also believe that the Lord is pushing the Canaanites out of the Promised Land for Israel. Both Rahab and the Gibeonites hear the news about how God saved the Israelites from Egypt. Rahab and the Gibeonites also hear about how God helps the Israelites win the fights against Sihon and Og. So, both Rahab and the Gibeonites want to be friends with Israel. But the Gibeonites refuse to serve the God of Israel. Rahab does not. Rahab wishes to serve Him and be saved. But the Gibeonites trick the Israelites into protecting them.

Moses taught that God's people must ask Him what He wanted them to do before they did anything (Numbers 27:16–21). Joshua should have asked the Lord what He wanted him to do. Then God would have kept Joshua from being tricked.

The first job of Christian leaders is to ask God what He wants them to do (1 Chronicles 28:9; 2 Chronicles 15:2; 2 Chronicles 18:4; 2 Chronicles 20:4). The Israelites got trapped in the promise they made to the Gibeonites. If the Israelites let the Gibeonites live, they disobeyed God's command about letting their enemies live. Or if they killed the Gibeonites, the Israelites broke their promise. Any choice they made caused them to break their promise to God.



Moses taught that God's people must ask Him what He wanted them to do before they did anything (Numbers 27:16–21).

SURPRISING MERCY (Joshua 9:21–27)

How did Joshua show that he was both fair and filled with mercy? Read Joshua 9:21–27 for the answer.

What would happen if the Israelites attacked the Gibeonites? The Israelites couldn't do that, even if they wanted to. The leaders of Israel made a promise to protect the Gibeonites. Yes, the Gibeonites tricked the leaders into making it. But as long as the Israelites' promise didn't break God's law (Judges 11:29–40), they must keep their promise.

In the Old Testament, holy people kept their promises. They also made wise decisions. They didn't make promises they couldn't keep (Psalm 15:4; Psalm 24:4; Ecclesiastes 5:2, 6). Israel's leaders made their promise to the Gibeonites in the name of the Lord, the God of Israel. So, the leaders couldn't change their promise.

Now, because of this promise, the Israelites and the Gibeonites were connected forever. The Gibeonites worked as the woodcutters and water carriers for God's house (Joshua 9:23). So, the Gibeonites became part of Israel's worship community. The leaders of Israel announce that the Gibeonites will be Israel's servants (Joshua 9:21). But Joshua's words change this curse into a blessing for the Gibeonites.

Bible history shows us that the Gibeonites were loyal to God's people. God showed them His loving favor. The Israelites kept their promise to the Gibeonites for hundreds of years. So, when the Israelites came back from Babylon, the Gibeonites helped them rebuild Jerusalem (Nehemiah 7:25).

What if the Gibeonites didn't trick Israel and asked for God's mercy, just as Rahab did? Would God save them? We don't know the answer. We do know God's plan is to save sinners. He doesn't want to punish them. He wants them to stop sinning and accept His mercy (compare with Ezekiel 18:23 and Ezekiel 33:11). For sure, the Gibeonites' trick was wrong. But we must believe that the Gibeonites really wanted God to show them mercy. The other Canaanites refused to stop sinning or honor God's plan. So, God destroyed them (Genesis 15:16). But God honored the Gibeonites because they believed He was all-powerful. The Gibeonites also wanted to be at peace with Israel. So, they chose to stop worshiping false gods and to worship only the Lord.



The Gibeonites worked as the woodcutters and water carriers for God's house (Joshua 9:23).

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “Crossing the Jordan,” pages 482, 483, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

After we read about Rahab and the spies, the Old Testament doesn’t say anything else about her. In the New Testament, Rahab shows up in the family line of Jesus. The Bible says that Rahab became the wife of Salmon. Salmon was from the family group of Judah. Rahab was the mother of Boaz, who married Ruth. So, Rahab was Ruth’s mother-in-law (Matthew 1:5; compare with Ruth 4:13, 21). Think about Rahab’s amazing change! Rahab used to be a prostitute. As we already saw, a prostitute is someone who has sex for pay. As a citizen of Jericho, Rahab would have been destroyed. But Rahab believes in God. Because of her faith, Rahab becomes an ancestor of King David and of Jesus. See what God can do when we believe, even if our faith is as small as a mustard seed! (Read Matthew 17:20; Luke 17:6.)

“Rahab isn’t the only person who worshiped false gods and then later accepted God’s mercy. The Gibeonites gave up their false gods. They joined with Israel and shared in the blessings of God’s promise.

“God doesn’t show favor to people because of where they were born or who their family is. God made all of us. So, we are all part of God’s family. Jesus came to break every wall that separates us from God and from other people. God wants us to come to Him. He doesn’t want anything to get in our way. God’s love is so deep, big, and powerful. God’s love can reach anyone wherever they are. God’s love lifts us out of Satan’s control. God’s love helps save us from Satan’s lies. God’s love brings us to His throne. God’s rainbow is around His throne. This rainbow is a symbol of God’s promise to us. God’s promise is for everyone who believes in Jesus. His promise is for Jews and Greeks alike, for slaves and for free people.”—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, pages 369, 370, adapted.



God’s rainbow is around His throne. This rainbow is a symbol of God’s promise to us.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① What does it mean to give someone a second chance? Are there times when we shouldn’t give people second chances? If yes, what are some examples?
- ② How is Rahab an example of faith?
- ③ How can we show people mercy and also be fair?

“DON’T WORRY. GOD WILL HELP.”

Inácio Manoel sold Bible books for a living in Brazil. Inácio knocked on the door of the house. A woman answered. When she learned who Inácio was, she yelled, “I hate Christians!”

Inácio was surprised. The woman’s house was the first house he visited on his first day of work as a Bible bookseller. Inácio also planned to offer Bible studies to people.

Inácio and a friend went to the next house. A big dog barked at them in the yard. Inácio’s friend was not happy that they met an angry woman at the first house and an angry dog at the second house. Inácio told his friend not to worry. “God is with us.”

A woman came out of the house and led the dog away. Then the woman invited Inácio and his friend inside. The three of them had a heart-to-heart conversation. The woman told Inácio and his friend about her troubles since her husband went to prison. The next Sabbath, the woman came to church with her three young children. Inácio was amazed. He told God that he wanted to lead people to Him for the rest of his life.

Inácio’s biggest surprise came when they visited the third house that day. The woman who lived there was named Edileuza. Edileuza agreed to Bible studies on Saturday afternoons. As they studied together week after week, they came to the Bible truth about the seventh-day Sabbath. Edileuza worked two jobs. She was a housekeeper. She also painted ladies’ fingernails for a living. She didn’t think she could take Sabbaths off.

Edileuza explained, “I make the most money on that day of the week. So, I need to work Sabbaths. What else can I do?”

Inácio said, “Don’t worry. God will help. He has something better for you.”

At the next Bible study, Edileuza said that she met a stranger on the street. The man said he needed a good housekeeper and asked her if she knew anyone who could do the job. Best of all, the housekeeping job gave her the Sabbath off.

Edileuza smiled as she shared the story with Inácio. She said, “I love my new job as housekeeper. Now my pay is three times more than I earned before in both of my old jobs.”

Edileuza was baptized. Later, the rest of her family also got baptized.

Inácio is now 68 years old. For the past 36 years, 4 to 11 people get baptized every year because of him. Everywhere he goes, he carries Bible lessons with him. Every night he prays, “Lord, put someone in my path, so I can share Your love.”

Inácio says, “I can live without everything in this life except Bible studies.” This quarter’s 13th Sabbath offering will help build a church in the area where Inácio lives. Watch a short YouTube video of Inácio at: <https://bit.ly/Inacio-Brazil>.

INSIDE Story



A big dog barked at them in the yard.



Inácio Manoel

Remembering God's Mercy



SABBATH—OCTOBER 11

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Joshua 3:1–5; Numbers 14:41–44; Joshua 3:6–17; Joshua 4; Judges 3:7; Matthew 3:16, 17.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘The Lord your God caused the water to stop flowing. The river was dry until the people finished crossing it. The Lord did the same thing for us at the Jordan that he did for the people at the Red Sea. Remember that he stopped the water at the Red Sea so we could cross. The Lord did this [miracle] so all people would know he has great [amazing] power. Then they will always respect the Lord your God’ ” (Joshua 4:23, 24, ICB).



A policeman turned his lights on behind John's car. John pulled his car over to the side of the road.

A POLICEMAN turned his lights on behind John's car. John pulled his car over to the side of the road. Then John remembered he left his driver's license at work. John explained to the policeman what happened. The policeman asked John about his job. John said he was a professor. Then the policeman gave John a ticket. The policeman told John not to think of the ticket as punishment.

The policeman said, “When people want to learn something, they pay money for school. This ticket is the money you must pay to learn to remember your license when you drive. Have a good day, professor!”

As humans, we often forget things. We forget to water the plants or to wish someone happy birthday. But if we forget our spiritual needs, we can get in worse trouble than getting a ticket. Our everlasting life is in danger.

This week, let's study about the Israelites crossing the Jordan River. What can we learn from their experiences?

CROSSING THE JORDAN
(Joshua 3:1–5 and Numbers 14:41–44)

Why did God ask the Israelites to prepare for the things that were about to happen? Read Joshua 3:1–5 and Numbers 14:41–44 for the answer.

In Joshua 3:1–5, we read about the ark of God’s promise for the first time in the book of Joshua. Before this time, where else does the Bible talk about the ark? Moses talks about the ark, together with God’s holy tent (Exodus 40:21). Moses also talks about the ark and Israel’s journey from Sinai (Numbers 10:33–36). We read about the ark when the Israelites try to start winning the Promised Land and fail (Numbers 14:44). The ark was the most holy object in the Israelite holy tent. Three things were kept inside the ark. Each of these things showed Israel’s special relationship with God: (1) The Ten Commandments; (2) Aaron’s special stick; and (3) a jar of manna or bread from heaven (Exodus 16:33; Hebrews 9:4).

Israel did special things to get ready to cross the Jordan. The people also took the ark with them. These things helped the Israelites remember that God was leading them. They would win only if they followed God’s plan and schedule. The Bible says that God sits on His throne above the angels that cover the ark of God’s promise (Exodus 25:22; Numbers 7:89). The ark follows God. When God moves, the ark moves with Him. God enters Canaan in front of the Israelites. God leads His people in the fight to win the Promised Land.

Do you see the word or words in Joshua 3:5 written as “pure [clean]” (ERV), “holy” (ICB, NLV), “set yourselves apart [separate]” (NirV), or “make yourselves ready” (EASY)? In the Hebrew language, this command means the things the priests or holy leaders did to become clean before they served God in His holy tent (Exodus 28:41; Exodus 29:1). The Israelites got clean before they met with God at Sinai (Exodus 19:10, 14). The people also needed to become clean before they fought in a war (Deuteronomy 23:14). What things did the people do to get clean? They stopped sinning. In Numbers 11:18, we see this same command to become clean. The people must become clean first. Then God can do a miracle for them.

When Israel crosses the Jordan River, God will prove to His people that they can trust His promise. He will give them the Promised Land.



Each of these things showed Israel’s special relationship with God:

- (1) The Ten Commandments;**
(2) Aaron’s special stick;
and (3) a jar of manna or bread from heaven
(Exodus 16:33; Hebrews 9:4).

THE LIVING GOD OF WONDERS (Joshua 3:6–17)

With God’s help, the Israelites cross the Jordan River. Their crossing is a miracle. What does this miracle tell us about the God we serve? Read Joshua 3:6–17 for the answer.

Joshua 3:5 says that Israel’s crossing is a miracle. The word “miracle” comes from the Hebrew word “niphla’ot.” “Niphla’ot” are the “mighty acts of God” that show His power (Psalm 72:18; Psalm 86:10). Later, the Israelites think about these mighty acts. Then they praise the Lord (Psalm 9:1) and tell other people about Him (Psalm 96:3). Some of God’s miracles include the punishments in Egypt (Exodus 3:20; Micah 7:15), the crossing of the Red Sea, and God’s leading Israel in the desert (Psalm 78:12–16).

Bible writers tell us that God made the skies and the earth. So, God is very powerful. The things He makes cannot limit His actions. So, God can do anything (Jeremiah 32:17). God’s name is wonderful (Judges 13:18). We cannot fully understand Him.

When we compare God with the other gods, we see that they can’t save (Psalm 96:5; Isaiah 44:8). But the God of the Bible is a living God. His followers can trust Him to help them.

God’s special messenger, Zechariah, also used the word “miracle.” Zechariah used this word to discuss Israel’s future after the people came back from Babylon. God showed Zechariah that Jerusalem would be fully rebuilt. Then old people would sit in the streets of the city again. Boys and girls would play there. The people of Jerusalem could hardly believe Zechariah’s promise. The city was ruined. So, how could this miracle happen? Zechariah announced: “This is what the Lord of heaven’s armies says: ‘Those who are left alive then may think it is too difficult to happen. But it is not too difficult for me,’ says the Lord of heaven’s armies. This is what the Lord of heaven’s armies says: ‘I will save my people from countries in the east and west. I will bring them back. And they will live in Jerusalem. They will be my people. And I will be their good and loyal God’ ” (Zechariah 8:6–8, ICB).

Read what Jesus says in Luke 18:18–27. How does Jesus’ answer to His followers help you trust that God is powerful enough to save His people?



**Then old people
would sit in the streets
of the city again.
Boys and girls
would play there.**

REMEMBER (Joshua 4)

Why did God tell Joshua to put 12 stones in the Jordan River and another 12 stones in Gilgal? What did God want the Israelites to remember when they saw the stones? Read Joshua 4 for the answers.

The stones shall be a “sign.” The Hebrew word “’ot” is often written as “wonder.” The word “’ot” can mean the miracles God does (read yesterday’s study). These miracles include God’s ten punishments against Egypt. The word “’ot” also can mean a “symbol” or “sign.” This symbol or sign shows us Bible truth. A rainbow is a “sign” of God’s promise (Genesis 9:12, 13). The Israelites put blood on the tops and sides of the doors of their houses in Egypt. The blood was a sign (Exodus 12:13) of their faith in God to save them. Most important, the Sabbath is a sign. The Sabbath shows that God made the skies and the earth. The Sabbath also shows us that God is with His people and makes them holy (Exodus 31:13, 17; Ezekiel 20:12).

In Joshua 4, the stones together make a sign. The stones will help future Israelites remember the miracle at the Jordan River. God parted the waters so that Israel could walk across on dry land. God’s followers often put stones in different places (Genesis 28:18–22). These stones, and other signs, caused people to ask questions about the Lord (Exodus 12:26, 27; Deuteronomy 6:20–25). For sure, the stones in the Jordan River and at Gilgal are powerful signs. They help the Israelites remember their past. At the same time, when the Israelites see the stones, or other signs, they must do more than remember. They must obey (Deuteronomy 5:15; Deuteronomy 8:2).

Now we understand why God commanded His people to set up the stones. The stones will help the Israelites remember forever the Lord’s miracles for them. Future Israelites also must understand the meaning of these stones. They can keep their faith alive only if they understand the mighty acts of the Lord in the past. Then they will have a living faith, not a dead religion. The same is true for us today. In the end, we need to make our faith our own. No one can believe for us.

What are some of the signs from your own experience? How do they help you remember the wonderful things God did for you?



The stones will help Israelites remember forever the Lord’s miracles for them.

ALWAYS REMEMBER HOW THE LORD LED YOU (Judges 3:7)

Read Joshua 4:20–24, along with Judges 3:7; Judges 8:34; Psalm 78:11; Deuteronomy 8:2, 18; and Psalm 45:17. Why must we remember the mighty things the Lord did for us in the past?

Notice the change from “you” to “us” in Joshua 4:23. The verse says that God dried up the Jordan River for “you.” Who is the “you” being talked about in this verse? The “you” is all the Israelites who just crossed the Jordan River. Compare how this same verse talks about Israel’s crossing of the Red Sea. The verse says that God dried up the Red Sea for “us.” The word “us” means the few people who are alive from the time when God led Israel out of Egypt. When we compare the two crossings, we see that many things are the same. The Israelites who crossed the Red Sea told their story to their children. Their story helped the children understand better their own crossing of the Jordan River.

When we tell our stories to our children, we help them remember the wonderful things God did. Sad to say, when we grow old, we may start to forget things. That is often a part of growing old. But sometimes our problem with remembering is not because we get old. Sometimes we stop thinking or caring about the things God did for us. When we stop, we may put ourselves in danger. So, we must do our best to remember the things God does for us.

We also must remember who we are. We must remember why we are here and the work God gave us to do. So, be sure to take time each day to remember these important things.

Why must we always remember what Jesus did for us? Does anything really matter if we don’t remember? Read 1 Corinthians 11:24, 25 and John 14:26 for the answers.

Ellen G. White understood that we must remember the things God did for us in the past. If we don’t, then we may stop serving God in the future: “Do we need to be afraid about the future and the things that will happen? Not if we always remember the way that the Lord led us in the past. We must remember the things He taught us, too.”—*Life Sketches*, page 196, adapted.

How does remembering the things the Lord has done for us make our relationship with Him stronger each day?



When we tell our stories to our children, we help them remember the wonderful things God did.

THE JORDAN RIVER AS A SYMBOL (Matthew 3:16, 17)

**“He caused the Red Sea to become dry land.
Then his people walked across the Jordan River!
So we praise him for what he did there!” (Psalm
66:6, EASY).**

When Israel crosses the Red Sea and the Jordan River, a new age in Bible history starts. Both the Red Sea and the Jordan River are symbols. These symbols teach us Bible truth (read Psalm 66:6; Psalm 114:1–7; and 2 Kings 2:6–15). Old Testament verses compare the Israelite’s crossing of the Red Sea with their crossing of the Jordan River. In Psalm 66, the writer of the poem celebrates God’s saving mercy in his life (Psalm 66:16–19). The poet uses the crossings of the Red Sea and the Jordan River to teach us about God’s mercy.

Psalm 114 also compares Israel’s crossing of the Red Sea with their crossing of the Jordan River. Both crossings teach the same Bible truth about God. The Lord led Israel out of slavery and made them free. The Lord led them from the desert into the Promised Land. In Psalm 114 and Psalm 66, the poet uses the two crossings to show change. The poet’s life changed from feeling helpless and poor to feeling healed, safe, happy, and saved.

When God carries Elijah to heaven, that story also happens at the Jordan River. The life of Elijah’s helper, Elisha, also is changed (1 Kings 19:21). When God takes Elijah to heaven, Elisha becomes God’s special messenger to Israel.

Read Matthew 3:16, 17 and Mark 1:9. How do the New Testament writers talk about the Jordan River? What do they suggest that the Jordan River is a symbol of?

Jesus’ work on earth follows the pattern of Israel’s ancient history in the Old Testament. Jesus has experiences that help us remember Israel’s experience at the Red Sea and the Jordan River. God leads Jesus out of Egypt (Matthew 2:14–16). Jesus spends 40 days in the desert (Matthew 4:1, 2). In the same way, Israel spent 40 years in the desert. Before Jesus starts His public work for God, He is baptized in the Jordan River (Matthew 3:16, 17; Mark 1:9). Later, the book of Hebrews talks about Israel’s crossing of the Jordan. The crossing into Canaan is a symbol for the rest that Christians “enter” into with faith.



**When God takes Elijah
to heaven, Elisha becomes
God’s special messenger
to Israel.**

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “Crossing the Jordan,” pages 483, 484, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

“Study carefully the experiences of Israel in their travels to Canaan. Also, study Joshua 3 and 4. These chapters talk about how Israel got ready and then crossed over the Jordan River into the Promised Land. We always need to remember the lessons that the Lord taught His people in ancient times. Then Bible teachings always will be interesting and important to us, just as they were to Israel in Bible times.” —Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 2, page 994, adapted.

“Modern Israel is in danger of forgetting God. When we forget God, we will worship false gods, the same as Israel did in Bible times. Today, Christians worship many false gods. Sabbath keepers worship false gods, too. In Old Testament times, God told Israel to be careful. They must not worship false gods. False gods lead us away from serving the living God. If false gods led Israel away from serving God, they would be under God’s curse. So, Israel must always remember to love God with all their heart, spirit, and might. Then God would bless them in every way. God would remove all disease from them.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 1, page 609, adapted.



Study Joshua 3 and 4.
These chapters talk about how Israel got ready and then crossed over the Jordan River into the Promised Land.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Talk about the miracle of Israel’s crossing at the Jordan River. What is a miracle? Does it seem to you that God isn’t doing miracles today? Explain.
- ② What can you do to remember the important spiritual truths about God that the Bible teaches? Why is our having a relationship with God so important to our remembering? Also, why must we be careful NOT to build our whole Christian experience on powerful past experiences? At the same time, how can we use our past experiences to help us remember the wonderful ways God worked in our lives?
- ③ How can the Sabbath help us to remember how God helped us in the past? How does the Sabbath also help us understand the promised rest that we will enjoy in God’s kingdom in the future?

SWEATSHIRTS AND TEARS

Tsitsi Zondo didn't want to believe what she saw. It was a dark night in Zimbabwe. But her precious cargo of sweatshirts lay across the highway. She saw people in the road in the dark. They picked up the sweatshirts and then ran off with them.

Tears filled Tsitsi's eyes. Tsitsi borrowed money to buy the sweatshirts in South Africa. Now there was no way she could pay back the loan. Tsitsi had nothing. How would she take care of her children?

Tsitsi prayed. "Lord, You know that I've worked so hard to make my business a success. Now this awful thing happened. Of all the bags on the bus, my bag is the only one that fell open."

Earlier, Tsitsi packed 60 sweatshirts into a large bag. Then Tsitsi stored the bag on the roof of a bus for the trip home. The bus drove from Zimbabwe's border with South Africa to Tsitsi's home in Bulawayo. Halfway during the trip, a passenger got off the bus. The bus driver searched for the passenger's bag on the roof of the bus. The bus driver opened and closed many bags on the roof of the bus. Somehow, Tsitsi's bag didn't close.

The bus started its journey again. After the bus traveled for some time, the driver of the bus stopped when he saw the lights of a car flashing in his side mirror. The driver of the car said the bus was dropping sweatshirts ever since the last passenger got off.

Tsitsi checked her bag on the roof of the bus. She saw that she had only 10 sweatshirts left.

The bus driver knew that he was responsible for Tsitsi's loss. But the driver told Tsitsi, "I'm so sorry. I don't have the money to pay you back."

After Tsitsi prayed, she wiped away her tears. Tsitsi always paid tithe and offerings on the goods she bought from South Africa. Tithe is 10% of all the money we get. This money belongs to God. Tsitsi was sure God would take care of her.

In Bulawayo, Tsitsi's friends heard about what happened. Her friends prayed with her at her home. One friend gave her a loan to go back to South Africa and buy more sweatshirts.

Tsitsi accepted the money as an answer to prayer. She went back to South Africa. With the new sweatshirts she bought and sold, she delivered all the sweatshirts to her first customers. Tsitsi made a total of four trips to South Africa to pay back the two loans. But during that time, Tsitsi always had enough money for food and family expenses. She also kept paying tithe and offerings to the Lord.

Tsitsi doesn't understand how God works. But she knows that He always takes care of our needs. Watch a short YouTube video of Tsitsi Zondo at: <https://bit.ly/Tsitsi>.

INSIDE *Story*



Tsitsi's precious cargo of sweatshirts lay across the highway.



Tsitsi Zondo

The War Behind All Wars



SABBATH—OCTOBER 18

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Joshua 5:13–15; 2 Kings 6:8–17; Nehemiah 9:6; Isaiah 37:16; Revelation 12:7–9; Isaiah 14:12–14; Ezekiel 28:11–19; Daniel 10:12–14; Exodus 2:23–25; Exodus 14:13, 14, 25; Exodus 17:7–13; Joshua 6:15–20.

MEMORY VERSE: “That had never happened before, and it has never happened again. That was the day the LORD obeyed a man. The LORD really was fighting for Israel!” (Joshua 10:14, ERV).



Joshua says that God will help Israel fight and win (Joshua 4:23, 24; Joshua 8:7).

THE BOOK OF JOSHUA is filled with many wars. God commanded His people to fight these wars. God helped His people to win. We see this idea all through the book of Joshua (Joshua 10:11). God talks about fighting for Israel (Joshua 6:2; Joshua 8:1). Joshua also says that God will help Israel fight and win (Joshua 4:23, 24; Joshua 8:7). Rahab says the same thing (Joshua 2:10). So do the spies (Joshua 2:24) and God's people (Joshua 24:18). God also says that He starts these wars.

For sure, God's announcement may fill us with surprise. If God is love, why does He fight? Why did His people fight so many wars during Old Testament times? (Read Exodus 34:6; Psalm 86:15; Psalm 103:8; Psalm 108:4.)

This week and next, we will answer the difficult question about the wars that God commanded Israel to fight. Why did God command wars in the book of Joshua and elsewhere?

COMMANDER OF THE LORD'S ARMY (Joshua 5:13–15)

Read Joshua 5:13–15. What does this verse say happened before Israel started to fight for the Promised Land?

Israel just crossed the Jordan River. The people now stand on the enemy's land. The city of Jericho lies in front of them. Its gates are closed (Joshua 6:1). The Israelites don't have a battle plan. Worse, they have only stone throwers, spears, and arrows to fight with.

Then a stranger comes to visit Joshua. Joshua asks this man who he is. The visitor's answer shows that He is not anyone Joshua thinks He is. In other words, the important question is not if He is on Joshua's side. But is Joshua on His side?

Compare Joshua 5:14, 15 with 2 Kings 6:8–17; Nehemiah 9:6; and Isaiah 37:16. What do these verses tell us about who the Commander of the Lord's army is?

The only time in the Bible that we read about the "Commander of the LORD's army" (NKJV) is right here. We won't find these words anywhere else in the Bible. Together, the words "Commander" and "army" always mean a military leader. The word "army" in the Bible can mean soldiers, angels, or the sun, moon, and stars.

Jesus appears to Joshua as a Friend and Helper. Jesus is the true Captain of Israel's army. More than all these things, Jesus is the Commander of the unseen army of angels. These angels help in the fight that is the biggest fight of all: the worldwide war between good and evil. Joshua's answer shows that he understands that the Commander is the Lord God. Joshua falls down in front of Him to show his respect and to worship Him (Joshua 5:14; Genesis 17:3; 2 Samuel 9:6; 2 Chronicles 20:18). Joshua is ready to follow the Lord's battle plan. Their fight for the Promised Land is part of a bigger war that includes God Himself and heaven's army.

The Commander of heaven's army is at work. He works hard to protect His people on earth. What hope should this Bible truth give us?



Joshua falls down in front of Jesus to show his respect and to worship Him (Joshua 5:14; Genesis 17:3; 2 Samuel 9:6; 2 Chronicles 20:18).

WAR IN HEAVEN (Revelation 12:7–9)

Joshua understood that the battle was part of a bigger fight. The name of this fight is the worldwide war between God and Satan. What do we know about this war? Read Revelation 12:7–9; Isaiah 14:12–14; Ezekiel 28:11–19; and Daniel 10:12–14.



The worldwide war between God and Satan, good and evil, was behind the wars that Joshua and Israel fought, too.

God filled heaven and many planets in outer space with people. God gave these people and us free will. Because we are all free to choose, we are free to love. We can choose to serve God. Or we can fight against Him. Lucifer chose to fight against God. Lucifer was the most powerful of the angels. Many angels chose to join Lucifer in his war.

Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 talk about this war. (Some Bible thinkers say that these chapters talk only about the king of Babylon and a leader in Tyre. But there are clear hints that these chapters in Isaiah and Ezekiel talk about something more.) The Bible says that the king of Babylon wanted to put his throne above God's throne (Isaiah 14:12, 13). The Bible also says that the king of Tyre lived in Eden. He was as an angel on God's holy mountain (Ezekiel 28:12–15). None of these things are true about the real kings of Babylon and Tyre. But they are true about Lucifer.

The real kings of Babylon and Tyre weren't perfect. But Lucifer was perfect before he sinned. For sure, the kings of Babylon and Tyre in the verses are symbols of something much more. So, what are those symbols talking about? Isaiah is really telling us a picture story. He uses the king of Babylon as a symbol for fighting against God and pride. In the same way, Ezekiel also uses symbols. Ezekiel tells us that the real prince of Tyre (Ezekiel 28:2) is not the same as the king of Tyre (Ezekiel 28:11, 12). The prince is a leader on this earth. He is a symbol for the king who is invisible to human eyes. This king lived in heaven before he was thrown out. This king says that he is the leader of the whole earth.

According to Daniel 10:12–14, Satan and his angels try all the time to stop God's work on this earth. This worldwide war is going on behind everything that we see happening around us. The worldwide war between God and Satan, good and evil, was behind the wars that Joshua and Israel fought, too. So, Israel's wars were part of this worldwide war.

How do we see this worldwide war going on around us?

THE LORD IS A WARRIOR (Exodus 2:23–25)

What does it mean that God is a warrior? Read Exodus 2:23–25; Exodus 12:12, 13; and Exodus 15:3–11 for the answer.

During their long stay in Egypt, the Israelites forgot about God. They started to mix false religious ideas with true worship (compare with Exodus 32:1–4). The Egyptians made the Israelites their slaves. So, the Israelites cried to God to save them (Exodus 2:23–25). At the right time, the Lord came to save them.

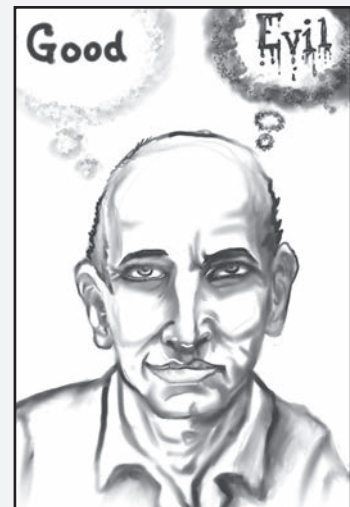
But the fight in Exodus 1–12 was more than a war between Moses and Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. In the Near East, people believed that fights between people groups were really fights between their gods. Exodus 12:12 announces that the Lord judged both Pharaoh and the gods of Egypt. The gods of Egypt were really powerful demons (Leviticus 17:7; Deuteronomy 32:17). These demons were the real power behind the throne of Egypt. They were the reason the laws weren't fair.

God is at war with sin. God won't allow sin or the worldwide war between good and evil to happen forever (Psalm 24:8; Revelation 19:11; Revelation 20:1–4, 14). God will destroy all the evil angels and sinners who love to break His law. This promise helps us to understand the wars in the Bible better. Israel's wars were part of the bigger worldwide war between good and evil. This war led to the Cross. The war will end when God judges all things. Then we will see that God was fair and loving in everything that happened in human history.

The worldwide war between God and Satan also helps us better understand why God destroyed the Canaanites. God is at war with evil. Satan lied about God. God will show everyone in heaven and on earth that Satan's words are lies (Romans 3:4; Revelation 15:3).

So, we must choose: God's side or the side of evil. When we understand these ideas, we will understand better why God destroyed the Canaanites. Their death shows us the final work God will do as Judge of everyone on earth.

In the worldwide war between God and Satan, there are only two sides. How do you know which side you are really on?



**So, we must choose:
God's side or
the side of evil.**

THE LORD WILL FIGHT FOR YOU (Exodus 14:13, 14, 25)

What was God's first plan for the Israelites in war? Read Exodus 14:13, 14, 25 for the answer.

When the Israelites were in trouble, Moses said, “ ‘Don't be afraid! Don't run away! Stand where you are and watch the LORD save you today. You will never see these Egyptians again. You will not have to do anything but stay calm. The LORD will do the fighting for you' ” (Exodus 14:13, 14, ERV). The Bible says that the Egyptians understood that God fought for His people: “The Egyptians shouted, ‘Let's get out of here! The LORD is fighting against us. He is fighting for the Israelites' ” (Exodus 14:25, ERV).

What happened at the Red Sea shows us God's plan for how God would help Israel. God will fight the battle. While God fights for Israel, Israel must not fight (Exodus 14:14). God is the warrior. He is in control of the fight. God makes the battle plan. He decides how and when He will fight to protect His people. God is in charge of the battle. If the Lord doesn't fight for Israel, they will have no chance of success.

History shows us that whenever the Israelites trusted in God, they did not need to fight (read 2 Kings 19; 2 Chronicles 32; Isaiah 37).

In God's perfect plan, Israel never needed to fight their own battles. God showed His people that they didn't need to use a weapon against the Egyptians in the desert. God fought the battle for Israel. In the same way, the Israelites didn't need to fight the Canaanites to win the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 7:17–19). But the Israelites didn't trust God enough to let Him fight for them. So, God allowed them to fight in the war against the Canaanites.

“The Israelites complained against the Lord. So, the Lord allowed their enemies to make war with them.”
—Ellen G. White, *The Story of Redemption*, page 134, adapted. What happens today when we complain against the Lord?



History shows us that whenever Israel trusted in God, they did not need to fight (read 2 Kings 19; 2 Chronicles 32; Isaiah 37).

THE SECOND-BEST CHOICE (Exodus 17:7–13)

Read Exodus 17:7–13 and Joshua 6:15–20. How are these two war stories the same? How are they different?

In Exodus 17, we read about the first time Israel fought after leaving Egypt. The Israelites fought against the Amalekites. A few weeks earlier, Israel saw God's mighty power when He judged the Egyptians. Then God helped the Israelites escape Egypt. We also saw that God's first plan for the Israelites didn't include their needing to fight (Exodus 23:28; Exodus 33:2). But shortly after God led the Israelites from Egypt, they started to complain on the way to the Promised Land (Exodus 17:3). The Israelites wondered if God was even with them. At this moment, the Amalekites came to fight against Israel. This fight didn't happen because of bad luck. God allowed the Amalekites to attack the Israelites so that they would learn to trust Him again.

God meets His people where they are. God is always inviting His people to come back to Him and His perfect plan for their lives. We must trust in Him. That's why God waited 40 years before He gave His people the rules about war. The people doubted God. So, they wandered in the desert for 40 years. Now the 40 years are over. The Israelites are ready to enter the Promised Land. New fights need new war plans. That was the time when God commanded the Israelites to completely destroy the Canaanites (Deuteronomy 20:16–18).

Now Israel must fight against their enemies. God used war as a test. The test showed the Israelites what was in their hearts. Would they be loyal to God and trust in Him? God didn't give up on His people. He allowed them to see His power. But before Israel went to war, they first needed to show God that they totally depended on Him.

In Joshua 24:11, we read that the Canaanites fought against the Israelites. God caused the walls of Jericho to come down. But the Israelites also had a part to do. They went with the Lord into battle. They stood against the stubborn people of the city who refused to serve God.

Israel's wars became a way of learning to trust in God's help completely. At the same time, the Israelites always knew that God decided if they won or lost (Joshua 7:12, 13; Joshua 10:8). The only way the Israelites could win a war was with faith in the promises of God. The choice to trust Him was their own.



God caused the walls of Jericho to come down.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Fall of Jericho,” pages 487–493, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

When Satan and his angels fought against God, God had a choice. God could choose to give up the leadership of heaven to an evil angel. Or God could continue to be who He was. He was the holy, loving Father of everything that lived. The Bible shows us that God chose to be who He was. So, His choice meant that Satan went to war against Him.

Today, Satan and his army of evil angels and people continue to fight against God. Long ago, the Lord chose to enter this fight to save sinners from sin and Satan. In Old Testament times, the Lord came to help His people. The Lord is a mighty warrior. This picture of God helps us understand that He will fight for us in the end times. God finally will end the worldwide war between good and evil (Revelation 20:8–10). Israel’s wars in Old Testament times are a picture of this worldwide war. Israel’s wars also give us hope that God will judge in favor of His people.

“God chose the time when His people should enter into the Promised Land. But the people didn’t trust in the Lord. So, God removed His offer to His people to let them enter at that time. . . . God didn’t want His people to fight to win the land. He wanted them to obey His commands. When they were obedient, He would reward their obedience. Then He would give them the Promised Land as a gift.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 392, adapted.



Today, Satan and his army of evil angels and people continue to fight against God.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① How does the worldwide war between good and evil help you understand why God commanded Israel to go to war?
- ② Talk about the question at the end of Monday’s study. How do we know that the worldwide war is happening around us? What is our part in this war? How can we do what God asks of us in this fight?
- ③ What does it mean to “stand still” and wait for God to fight for us in our spiritual life?
- ④ Many times when we disagree about things in the church, we want to see who is on our side. How should Joshua 5:13–15 change our hearts?

“WHAT DO YOU WANT?”

A Bible worker and his local partner visited a non-Christian neighborhood to sell Bible books. The neighborhood was in a big city in southern Asia. The Bible workers saw that the people who lived there were very religious because of the type of clothing they wore. Women wore long scarves or head coverings. Men had long beards. Some people had dark spots on their skin above their eyes. The spots came from bowing their faces to the floor during long prayers.

At one house a man with an angry face came to the front gate. He didn't open the gate. In a mean voice, the man asked the Bible workers, “What do you want?”

David, one of the Bible workers, said, “We are selling books in your community. Do you want to look at the books?”

The man said very angrily, “I'll be back in just a minute.” Then he left.

The Bible worker's partner, Maria, was afraid. She said, “Let's pray. That man looks scary.”

David said, “Maybe he's just hungry.” At that time of year, non-Christian religious men in that county didn't eat any food during the day for a whole month.

Then the man came back. He said, “Why don't you come in?”

Inside the house, he said, “What do you want?”

David pulled some health books from his bag.

The man looked interested. He said, “My wife is a health worker. She will be very interested in those books.” The man called his wife to come and look at the books on health.

As the man and his wife looked at the books, the man said, “Wow! These books are really good. The information looks helpful.” Then the man asked, “Who do you work for?”

David said, “We are Seventh-day Adventists.”

The man stood up and walked away. Then he came back and sat down. He stared at the visitors. No one said anything.

Then the man's wife broke the silence. She said, “You know, I have Adventist patients. They are very good people. But I don't really know much about them.”

Her husband started to walk back and forth. He appeared to be upset. Then he sat down again.

His wife asked, “What other books do you have?”

David opened his bag and pulled out *The Great Controversy*. He said, “This book is all about love, forgiveness, and peace.” The wife was happy to look at it. She asked, “What are your religious beliefs?” When the woman said this, her husband stood up and walked over to where they stood. The man pulled out his cell phone and started to record their conversation!

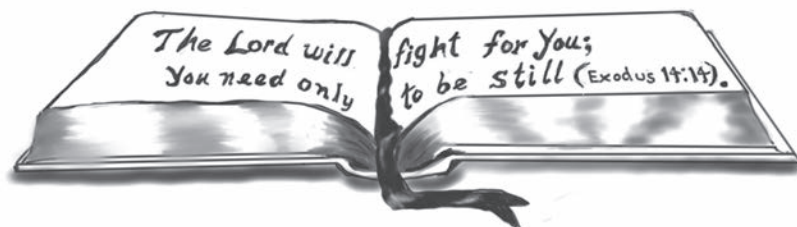
Read the rest of this story next week.

INSIDE
Story
by LAURIE DENSKI-SNYMAN



In a mean voice, the man asked the Bible workers, “What do you want?”

God Fights for You



SABBATH—OCTOBER 25

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Genesis 15:16; Genesis 18:25; Exodus 23:28–30; Deuteronomy 20:10, 15–18; Isaiah 9:6.

MEMORY VERSE: “Joshua won all these battles in one long fight. He won against all these kings and their lands. He won because the **LORD**, Israel’s God, was fighting on Israel’s behalf [for Israel]” (Joshua 10:42, **EASY**).

THE BOOK OF JOSHUA contains some stories that we may have trouble understanding. These stories are about war. The stories upset and bother many people. They ask, “How can a holy God ask His people to destroy another group of people?”

For sure, Christians do have trouble understanding the topic of war in the Old Testament. The Old Testament shows us that God is in control of everything in heaven and on earth. So, everything that happens must somehow be part of His plan, right? That’s why many people ask the question, “How can God allow war to happen?” Last week, we saw that God is fighting a war that is bigger than any battle in human history. This war touches every part of our lives. We also saw that we must first understand this worldwide war between good and evil. Then we will better understand the things that happen in the Bible and human history.

This week we continue to study about the wars that God asked His people to fight. We will try to answer the following questions: Why did God ask His people to fight these wars? What Bible truth do these wars teach us? What were the limits that God put on His people when they fought? What peace plan did God offer?



Joshua won because the **LORD**, Israel’s God, was fighting for Israel (Joshua 10:42, **EASY**).

THE SINS OF THE CANAANITES (Genesis 15:16)

Why did God offer the land of Canaan to the Israelites? Read Genesis 15:16; Leviticus 18:24–30; Deuteronomy 18:9–14; and Ezra 9:11 for the answer. What do these verses teach us about God’s bigger plan for His people?

If we want to understand why God said the Canaanites were so evil, we must read the book of Deuteronomy. The Canaanites killed babies and offered them to their gods as gifts. The Canaanites did magic. They communicated with evil spirits. They woke up the “dead” to get advice from them.

Bible thinkers who study Old Testament history discovered some ancient writings from this time. These writings talk about the Canaanite religion and people. The writings show that the Canaanite religion was very evil.

The Canaanites believed in many gods. The Canaanites thought these male and female gods, or goddesses, controlled nature with sex. What did the Canaanites believe happened when their gods and goddesses had sex with each other? Sex caused crops to grow and babies to be born! Or at least, that’s what the Canaanites thought. Also, the Canaanites believed that when they had sex, their behavior caused the gods and goddesses to have sex, too. When that happened, the crops grew, rain fell, and babies were born. So, sex was an important part of the Canaanite religion. As part of this belief, Canaanite men and women served their gods as sex slaves. These men and women had sex with each other as part of their worship!

Scientists found proof that the Canaanites killed their own children and offered them as gifts to their gods. These gods were really demons. Scientists discovered the crushed skeletons of Canaanite babies in large jars. The writing on the jars says that the babies were offerings.

Now we understand better why the Lord decided to give the land of Canaan to the Israelites. God gave the Canaanites time to learn about Him and give up their evil way of life. God sent Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to live among them so they could know God better. The Canaanites had the chance to change their lives and improve. But they continued to do evil. Finally, the Lord stopped them.



God sent Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to live among the Canaanites so they could know God better.

THE JUDGE OF HEAVEN AND EARTH (Genesis 18:25)

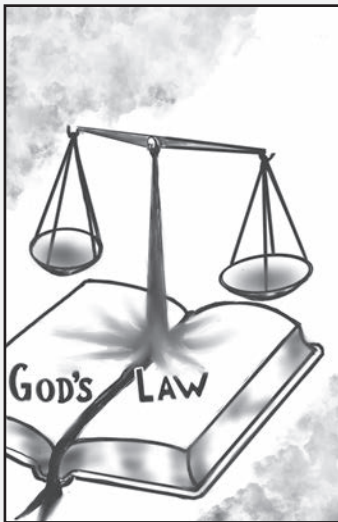
Read Genesis 18:25; Psalm 7:11; Psalm 50:6; Psalm 82:1; Psalm 96:10; and 2 Timothy 4:1, 8. What do these verses tell us about God? God is the Judge of heaven and earth. How does God's work as Judge help us understand why God asked His people to go to war? What is a "holy" war?

God is holy. A holy God cannot accept sin. God is patient with us sinners. But in the end, God will punish sin with death (Romans 6:23). The Lord announced war against all sin. That sin includes the sins of Israel and the Canaanites. The Israelites weren't made holy because they fought in a holy war. They were sinners, the same as other people (Deuteronomy 9:4, 5; Deuteronomy 12:29, 30). God used the Israelites to punish the other people around them. But if the Israelites disobeyed God, then God did not fight for them. God fought against them. God allowed Israel's enemies to attack them and cause them to suffer (compare with Joshua 7).

What, then, is a holy war? If we want to understand this idea, we must first understand God's work as Judge. The people from countries around Israel fought wars to get power, riches, and glory. The same is true today. But in Bible times, Israel fought for different reasons. Israel didn't fight to get glory or power. Israel fought for God. The Israelites fought to fill the land with God's peace. They fought to make things fair. So, the holy wars that Israel fought are really about God's work to make things fair. Israel's wars show God's work for His people as a Warrior, King, and Judge.

Yes, the Lord is a mighty fighter, who is also a judge. As judge, the Lord protects His law. The law shows us who He is. God is love. As a warrior, God won't allow people to fight against His government forever. So, the Lord's plan for war is never about winning glory or getting power. The Lord fights to bring peace. The Lord fights to make things fair. So, when God judges or goes to war, these two things are really the same thing. That's because God is the Person who is doing the work.

Think about God's work as Judge. As Judge, God is always fair. We can't buy God's favor with money. God won't allow evil or sin to continue forever. Why is the idea of a fair Judge so important to the Good News about Jesus?



As judge, the Lord protects His law.

REMOVE OR KILL? (Exodus 23:28–30)

Read Exodus 23:28–30; Exodus 33:2; Exodus 34:11; Numbers 33:52; and Deuteronomy 7:20. Also read Exodus 34:13; Deuteronomy 7:5; Deuteronomy 9:3; Deuteronomy 12:2, 3; and Deuteronomy 31:3, 4. What do these verses teach us about Israel's war to win the Promised Land? How much did Israel destroy?

God's first plan for the Canaanites was not death. God wanted to remove their land from them and leave them alive. When we look at the verses above, we see what God wanted Israel to do in war. God wanted Israel to remove the people from their land. God also wanted the Israelites to destroy the objects that the Canaanites used to worship their gods.

God wanted His people to stay clean in their hearts and minds. So, He ordered Israel to destroy all the things that the Canaanites used to worship their gods. These things would cause Israel to sin against God. At the same time, God showed mercy to the Canaanites who accepted Him. God allowed these Canaanites to go free (Joshua 2:9–14; compare with Judges 1:24–26). God destroyed only those Canaanites whose hearts were hard. These Canaanites refused to obey God. They hid in their cities. They continued to fight against God's plan for His people (Joshua 11:19, 20).

We may ask the question: If God's first plan was to let the Canaanites go free, why did the Israelites need to kill so many people?

When we study the Bible, we see that God didn't want to kill the Canaanites. But most of the Canaanites were the same as Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Their hearts grew hard against the Lord. They didn't obey His warnings. So, God destroyed them when He gave their land to Israel.

Are there things in your heart that you must allow God to remove and destroy? If so, what are they?



God showed mercy to the Canaanites who accepted Him. God allowed these Canaanites to go free (Joshua 2:9–14; compare with Judges 1:24–26).

FREE CHOICE (Deuteronomy 20:10, 15–18)

Read Deuteronomy 20:10, 15–18; Deuteronomy 13:12–18; and Joshua 10:40. What do these verses teach us about the rules of fighting that God gave to Israel? What limits did God put on Israel? What were the Israelites allowed to destroy? How much were they allowed to destroy?

The Bible uses a Hebrew word to talk about the people who were destroyed in war: “*cherem*.” “*Cherem*” shows us things that are under God’s curse. So, these things must be destroyed. Most of the time, “*cherem*” is used to talk about people, animals, or objects under God’s full control. In war, these things often were destroyed. We can best understand this idea if we also understand God’s fight against evil. This war is about Satan’s attacks on God’s love and His law.

In this war, everyone is on God’s side or against Him. One side leads to everlasting life. The other side leads to everlasting death.

When God destroyed the Canaanites, He showed what He will do to sin and evil in the end. God gave the work of destroying the Canaanites to His chosen people, Israel. But God controlled this work. This work was limited to a certain time and place in history. That was the time when Israel fought for the Promised Land. As we saw yesterday, God destroyed only the people who fought against Him. These people refused to stop sinning. God’s decision to destroy them wasn’t because He was mean or loved Israel more.

The Israelites understood that they also would be destroyed if they behaved the same as the Canaanites (compare with Deuteronomy 13). As we shall see, the stories about Rahab, Achan, and the Gibeonites show us that God is willing to show mercy to sinners who are under the curse of sin. But they must turn away from sin and accept Him. God always gives sinners a choice. They can choose to obey God and live. In the same way, the Israelites could lose God’s special favor if they sinned against the Lord.

What does the story about the hard hearts of the Canaanites teach us about our free choice today?



God always gives sinners a choice. They can choose to obey God and live.

THE PRINCE OF PEACE (Isaiah 9:6)

Read Isaiah 9:6; Isaiah 11:1–5; Isaiah 60:17; Hosea 2:18; and Micah 4:3. What do these verses tell us about the future that God plans for His people?

This week's lesson is about holy war in the Old Testament. But we need to discuss another idea that the Old Testament also talks about: the future of peace that God promises. The Savior will bring His people this peace. The Savior is named the Prince of peace (Isaiah 9:6). The Savior's kingdom will be a kingdom of peace. The wolf and the lamb will eat together in peace in this kingdom (Isaiah 11:1–8). There will be no more pain or suffering (Isaiah 11:9). Peace will control everything (Isaiah 60:17; Isaiah 66:12).

Read the story in 2 Kings 6:16–23. What does this story teach us about God's plan for His special people and for everyone else on earth too?

In this story, Elisha commands God's people to feed the Syrian army. Elisha chooses not to kill the Syrians (2 Kings 6:22). He chooses to show them mercy. God's plan for His people and for everyone else always is peace. In the story, Elisha knows that an invisible army of angels is around the enemy (2 Kings 6:17). These angels are stronger than the Syrian army. God wants to save people, not beat or destroy them. He wants them to live in peace, not as slaves. Hate and pain causes more hate and pain (Matthew 26:52). Peace makes more peace. The story in 2 Kings 6 ends with this verse: "After this [feast] happened, no more groups of Syrian soldiers came to attack Israel" (2 Kings 6:23, EASY).

Think about all the ways we can be the same as Jesus. How can we share His peace with other people? What about your own life right now? In what ways can you bring peace and not war to the lives of other people?



**The wolf and the lamb
will eat together in peace
in this kingdom
(Isaiah 11:1–8).**

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Fall of Jericho,” pages 491–493, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

As we saw already, the worldwide war between God and Satan helps us to understand Israel’s wars against the Canaanites.

“God is very patient. He doesn’t get angry easily or fast. God gave the Canaanites time to learn about His law and His love. God judged them because they refused to believe the Bible truth that He sent to them. The Canaanites chose their own ways and not God’s ways. God gave the reason why He didn’t remove the Canaanites right away from the Promised Land. God wanted to save the Amorites. But the Amorites continued to sin. Soon God would stop being patient with them because of their sins. Then He would destroy the Amorites. Until then, God would continue to be patient with them. God gave all the people groups in the land of Canaan time to come back to Him. But people who didn’t respect God’s law did more and more evil. Their children were born with the same evil hearts their parents had. The children did worse sins than their parents did. This made God angry. So, finally God punished them. Just because God didn’t punish them right away didn’t mean that their sins weren’t terrible.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 2, page 1005, adapted.



God gave the Canaanites time to learn about His law and His love.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① God is the Judge of all heaven and earth. Why is God’s work as Judge important to His plan to save us?
- ② What does the story about the Canaanites teach us about God and how patient He is with us? How can we show God’s love and be patient with other people?
- ③ Why do you think God respects our free choice? How are love and free choice connected with each other?
- ④ The Old Testament contains many stories about war and disagreement. But the Bible really is a promise for future peace. What can Christians do to bring peace in their communities?

"GOD BROUGHT YOU HERE"

Maria and David were Bible workers. Maria felt nervous as the man came near them in his home in a big city in southern Asia. The man recorded their conversation on his cell phone. The man waited for them to answer his wife's question about their religious beliefs.

David said, "As I said, we are Seventh-day Adventists."

The man asked, "Does that mean you are Christians?"

David prayed silently for wisdom. He knew that many people in that country didn't like Christianity. Many Christians drank alcohol and ate foods that weren't clean. The religion of that country did not allow its followers to do those things.

David answered, "Let me explain. We believe what Moses says. In Deuteronomy 6:4, Moses wrote, 'The LORD is our God. The LORD is the only [there is no other] God.' [ERV]. So, we believe there is one God. This verse tells us that."

The man said, "Interesting."

David said, "We also believe in the Sabbath. Moses' law says that we should worship the Lord on the Sabbath. The Sabbath starts Friday at sunset and continues until Saturday at sunset."

Then David talked about how the Lord said that eating pork was a sin, in Isaiah 66:17. The man continued to record the conversation. But his angry frown slowly became a smile.

David continued, "We believe our bodies are God's temple. While we live on earth, we must take care of them."

The man's smile grew big.

David added, "We don't believe in hurting our bodies. So, we do not drink alcohol or smoke."

The man said, "I believe God brought you to me." He got up and left the room. Then he came back with a plate of food. The man put the food on the table and asked the visitors to eat.

Then the man said a prayer. He thanked God for the meeting. He asked God to bless the food. After that, the man brought his adult son from a back room. The man said to his son, "I want you to meet these people." Then the man said to David and Maria, "I want to share my family with you." The man said he was sorry that he and his family couldn't eat with them. But they were fasting. When people fast, they don't eat food for a short time.

As David and Maria ate, the man asked them questions about *The Great Controversy*. The man said, "We are happy you came today. We know that God sent you here. We will accept you. Peace be with you."

As the visitors got ready to leave, the man blessed them. He said, "May you have peace and blessings as you visit with people in our neighborhoods."

INSIDE
Story
by LAURIE DENSKI-SNYMAN



The man put the food on the table and asked the visitors to eat.

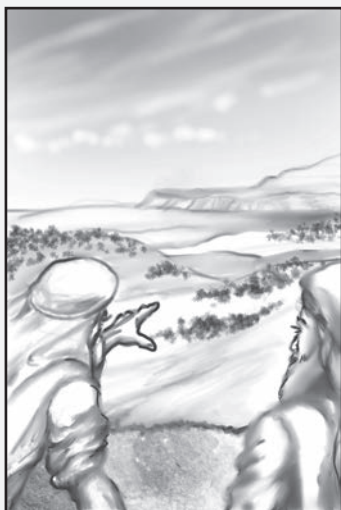
The Enemy Within



SABBATH—NOVEMBER 1

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Joshua 7; Joshua 7:16–19; Joshua 7:19–21; Joshua 8:1–29; Joshua 7:6–9.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘But I, the LORD, look inside a person’s mind. I see what he thinks and what he feels. I see how everyone lives, and I see the things that they [people] do. I give to each one what he deserves [the reward he should have]’ ” (Jeremiah 17:10, EASY).



While we wait
on the “border”
of the Promised Land,
God tests our faith.

IN JOSHUA 7, the Israelites have a terrible experience. This experience teaches the Israelites why they must honor their agreement with God. When the Israelites obey God, they win their wars. When the Israelites disobey God, they lose. The Lord is a mighty Warrior. Israel’s military success depends on God, not on a big army or clever battle plans. When the Lord goes with the Israelites to war, they win.

During the time that the Israelites fought to win the Promised Land, they learned a hard lesson. The lesson they learned was that their worst enemy was within their own camp. The walls and the strong cities were big problems. But the Israelites had a bigger problem than these things. Their problem was that their own people were very stubborn. They didn’t want to do what the Lord asked.

We have the same problem today as we wait for God to give us the things that He promised (1 Peter 1:4; Colossians 3:24). While we wait on the “border” of the Promised Land, God tests our faith. We can pass the test. But only if we give ourselves completely to Jesus.

BREAKING THE AGREEMENT (Joshua 7)

Read Joshua 7. What were the two big reasons that the people from Ai beat the Israelites in a fight?

Why did the Israelites fail to beat the people from Ai the first time they fought? Let's look at Joshua 7 for the answer.

There are two important reasons that Israel lost: (1) Achan's sin and (2) the Israelites' trust in their own strength. The people forgot to ask God for His advice before they attacked Ai. Also, Israel thought that the army from Ai was weak.

Let's look more closely at Achan's sin. Achan disobeys God. Joshua 7:1, 11–13 shows us that God holds Israel responsible for Achan's sin. So, Israel suffers for Achan's choice. God explains that Achan's sin is very bad. The Bible uses a well-known word for sin, "kḥata," to talk about Achan's sin. Then the Bible talks about five more sins that Achan did. (1) Achan turned away from God in his heart. (2) Achan stole things. (3) Worse, Achan stole things that God commanded Israel to destroy. (4) Achan lied. (5) Then Achan hid the things he stole.

Achan broke the agreement with God. But the whole community of Israel, and not just Achan, was guilty in God's eyes. That's why the Lord told Joshua, " 'The Israelites sinned against me. They have broken the agreement that I commanded them to obey' " (Joshua 7:11, ERV).

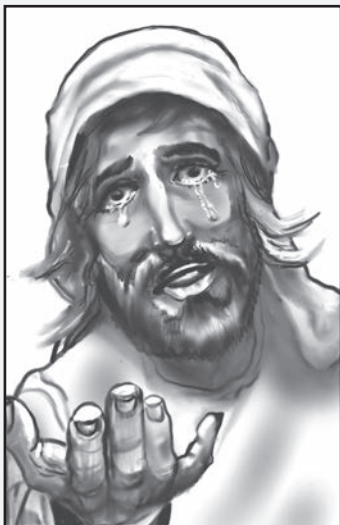
What are ways that communities can suffer from someone else's sins in the community? What examples can you think of? How was the community changed because of the experience?



**Israel suffers
for Achan's choice and
loses the fight.**

THE SIN OF ACHAN (Joshua 7:16–19)

Read Joshua 7:16–19. What does this story tell us about both God and Achan?



“Jesus cried when He scolded people for their sins.”

God doesn’t name the sinner right away. As Judge, God wants to show His people that He is fair. He also wants to show His mercy. So, God first explains the reason that Israel lost the fight. Then God tells the people to remove sin from their hearts and become clean (Joshua 7:13). God allows time to pass between this explanation and His punishment of the sin. God gives Achan time to confess his sin. Also, Achan’s family can decide at this time if they want to cover up Achan’s sin or refuse to go along with it. In the same way, God gave the sons of Korah a choice. They refused to side with their father. So, they avoided being destroyed (compare with Numbers 16:23–33; Numbers 26:11).

At last, God starts His work as Judge. First, God looks at Achan’s family group. Then God looks at Achan’s family. Then God looks at Achan. God’s work is very careful. He is the Witness to the crime. At the same time, He also is the Judge who will punish the guilty.

Achan is very stubborn. Does he really believe that God won’t find out who did the sin? We can’t hide anything from God’s eyes. God sees everything (Psalm 139:1–16; 2 Chronicles 16:9). He knows everything hidden in the human heart (1 Samuel 16:7; Jeremiah 17:10; Proverbs 5:21).

Notice how Joshua talks to Achan. Joshua names him “my son.” This name shows us the relationship between Joshua and Achan. Joshua is the leader of Israel and is much older than Achan. The words “my son” also show us that Joshua’s heart is filled with mercy for Achan. Joshua’s kind words and actions are a symbol of Jesus’ love for us. Jesus “was never mean and nasty. He didn’t say sharp words. Jesus didn’t cause anyone pain without good reason. Jesus was not afraid to stand against lies, doubt, and evil. But Jesus cried when He scolded people for their sins.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, page 353, adapted.

God knows everything you do. He even knows the things you do that no one else knows about. How does this idea change how you live your life? How should this idea change how you live?

LIFE-CHANGING CHOICES (Joshua 7:19–21)

Read Joshua 7:19–21. What does Joshua ask Achan to do? Why is this question so important? What does Achan’s answer show us about his heart?

Joshua asks Achan to do two things: (1) give glory to God and honor Him; and (2) confess his sin.

Sad to say, Achan didn’t do anything to show that he was really sorry. Achan hoped to keep his sin hidden. The law of Moses says that God can’t forgive sins that we aren’t sorry for (compare with Numbers 15:27–31).

Achan’s words in Joshua 7:21 help us remember Adam and Eve’s sin. Eve saw (“ra’ah” in the Hebrew language) that the tree was beautiful (“khamad” in the Hebrew language) and its fruit was good. She finally took (“laqakh” in the Hebrew language) the forbidden fruit. In the same way, Achan confesses that he saw (“ra’ah”) a beautiful coat, 200 silver coins, and a large piece of gold. Achan wanted (“khamad”) and took (“laqakh”) all of them. Achan’s choice shows that he was greedy. He didn’t trust in God to want what was best for him. Achan’s greedy heart showed that he believed God was hiding something good from him. Adam and Eve were guilty of thinking the same thing.

We also can compare Achan to Rahab (compare with Joshua 2:1–13). Rahab led the spies to the roof. She hid them from the soldiers. But Achan stole forbidden things and hid them from Joshua. Rahab was kind to the Israelite spies. She did things that helped them win the war. But Achan caused trouble for Israel with his greedy heart. Then Israel lost their fight against Ai. Rahab made an agreement with the Israelites. But Achan broke the agreement with the Lord. Rahab saved herself and her family. Then they became respected citizens in Israel. But Achan and his family died. They became examples of shame.

Think about how easy it is for us to be selfish and greedy. How can we avoid these sins? (Compare your answer with Luke 12:15.)



Achan confesses that he saw (“ra’ah”) a beautiful coat, 200 silver coins, and a large piece of gold.

THE DOOR OF HOPE (Joshua 8:1–29)

Read Joshua 8:1–29. What does this story tell us about how God can change our worst mistakes into blessings?

God turns Israel's loss at the Valley of Achor into success. The word "Achor" comes from the Hebrew word for "trouble." Now the Valley of Achor becomes a place of hope (compare with Hosea 2:15). The citizens of Ai are filled with pride because they beat Israel in the first fight. They are sure they can beat Israel again. The citizens of Ai attack the Israelites, who pretend to run away as if they are losing the fight. This move causes the people to leave the city of Ai and chase the Israelites. What the people of Ai don't know is that 30,000 Israelites are standing not too far behind the city (Joshua 8:4). These 30,000 Israelites will set the city of Ai on fire. Joshua 8:7 says that the Lord is responsible for Israel's win. God gave Joshua the battle plan. But the Israelites didn't win because of the excellent military plan. They won because the Lord helped them fight. Then He gave them the city as a gift.

When the men of Ai leave the city, they start to chase after the Israelites. Then God gives Joshua orders. God shows us that He is in charge of the battle. Now we will see that the Israelite army will win.

Joshua's weapon is a curved sword, and not a spear. In Joshua's time, people didn't often use curved swords when they fought. But the curved sword was a symbol of leadership and control. So, the curved sword shows God's control over the fight. When Joshua held out the curved sword until Israel won, he showed that he was Israel's leader. Joshua showed the same leadership over Israel that Moses showed when Israel crossed the Red Sea (Exodus 14:16) and fought against the Amalekites (Exodus 17:11–13).

God doesn't do any special miracle in the fight against Ai. But the Israelites know that God helps them win. The Israelites win because Joshua has faith in God and obeys Him. This important rule is a lesson for us today. Whenever we are in trouble or need help, we must trust in God to give us success.



When Joshua held out the curved sword until Israel won, he showed that he was Israel's leader.

A WITNESS TO GOD'S POWER (Joshua 7:6–9)

As we already saw (read lesson 5), God gave the Canaanites a chance to know about Him and stop doing evil. But they refused God's invitation. Finally, the time came for God to punish them for their sins.

Read Joshua 7:6–9, which tells us what Joshua said and did when the people of Ai first beat the Israelites. Carefully read Joshua 7:9. What important rule do we see in Joshua's words?

At first, Joshua seems as if he is complaining, the same as the Israelites after they left Egypt. "They said, 'It would have been better if the LORD had just killed us in the land of Egypt. At least there we had plenty to eat. We had all the food we needed. But now you have brought us out here into this desert to make us all die from hunger'" (Exodus 16:3, ERV).

Now listen to Joshua: " 'Lord GOD, you brought our people across the Jordan River. Why did you bring us this far and then allow the Amorites to destroy us? We should have been satisfied and stayed on the other side of the Jordan River'" (Joshua 7:7, ERV).

But soon after, Joshua explains why he is upset. He is not complaining. He is worried about God's honor and name. Joshua doesn't want people to laugh at God because Israel lost the fight. " 'The Canaanites and all the other people in this country will hear about what happened. Then they will attack us and kill all of us! Then what will you do to protect your great [mighty and wonderful] name?' " (Joshua 7:9, ERV).

This verse shows us an important idea that was part of God's plan for Israel. God wanted the countries around Israel to see the wonderful things He did for His people who obeyed Him. These countries also could learn about God from the success He gave Israel in war. But what if things went bad for Israel, as they did here? Then the Canaanites and other people groups would think Israel's God was weak (read Numbers 14:16; Deuteronomy 9:28). Then the Canaanites would try to attack Israel.

Read Deuteronomy 4:5–9. How do these verses help us to understand God's plan for our church as His witnesses?



" 'The Canaanites and all the other people in this country will hear about what happened. Then they will attack us and kill all of us! Then what will you do to protect your great [mighty and wonderful] name?' " (Joshua 7:9, ERV).

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Fall of Jericho,” pages 493–498, in *Patriarch and Prophets*.

“The sin that destroyed Achan started with a greedy heart. This sin is a problem for many people. But few people understand its danger. . . .

“Achan knew he was guilty and said so. But he confessed his guilt when it was too late to do him any good. Achan saw Israel’s armies come back from Ai. They were sad because they lost the fight. But Achan didn’t come out and confess his sin. Achan saw Joshua and the leaders of Israel bow to the earth with sorrow. Their suffering was too much and deep for words. If Achan confessed his sin at that time, then the leaders would have proof that Achan was sorry for his sin. But Achan stayed silent. Achan listened to the announcement that someone did a terrible crime. Achan even heard what the crime was. But he didn’t confess his sin. Then the Lord came to judge what happened. Achan’s heart filled with terror when he saw that his family group was selected. Then his family line and then his own family members were selected as guilty. Achan said nothing until God announced his guilt. When Achan could no longer hide his sin, he confessed the truth. Many people are the same as Achan. They confess their crimes only when they can’t hide them anymore. Achan confessed that he was wrong, but not because he was sorry for his sin. Achan continued to hide his sin because he hoped he wouldn’t get caught and punished. But Achan’s words showed that his punishment was fair. Achan wasn’t really sorry for his sin. His heart hadn’t changed. He didn’t hate evil.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pages 496–498, adapted.



“Achan saw Joshua and the leaders of Israel bow to the earth with sorrow. Their suffering was too much and deep for words.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Read the 10th commandment. How do we obey this commandment when we see ads all around us for things we don’t really need? How is a real need different from something we want? Why is the answer important for us to know?
- ② Read Daniel’s prayer in Daniel 9:4–19. Why does Daniel say “we” did all these bad things, even when Daniel didn’t do any of them? Why does Daniel include himself? What does the answer teach us about prayer?

GIVING GOD BACK HIS THINGS—PART 1

Frank Mukube ran out of money after he moved to a new town in Namibia. Frank rented a house and bought furniture with a loan: a bed, couch, stove, radio, television, rug, and pots for his kitchen.

Frank got a new job as a teacher. He made a budget for his expenses each month and followed it carefully. At first, Frank had no trouble giving tithe and offerings and paying his loan. Tithe is 10% of all the money we get. But then new expenses came up. Soon Frank didn't have enough money for everything. So, he stopped giving tithe and offerings. Frank felt terrible. So, he prayed. "Lord, what shall I do?" Frank needed two years to pay the loan back. But in Malachi 3:8, 9, the Lord says to His people, "'A man should not rob God. But you are robbing me.' But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' I say, 'You do not give to me the tithes and the offerings that you should give.' Yes, all of you are robbing me. The whole nation [people group] of Israel is guilty. So you will receive the punishment of a curse'" (EASY).

Two years passed. Frank felt terrible until the day he paid back the loan. But Frank didn't feel the joy he expected to feel when he paid back the loan. He felt worse. So, he decided to take everything he bought back to the store. The first person who learned about Frank's plan was his boss at the school where Frank taught. Frank asked for permission to leave school for a few hours. He said, "I need to take my stuff back to the store."

His boss asked, "Didn't you pay for all of it already?"

Frank said, "Yes. But I want to take everything back. . . . These things are separating me from God because I didn't give God the money that belonged to Him."

Frank's boss laughed in his face. "You can't take those things back! Are you crazy?" But his boss let Frank go.

Frank went to his rented house. He announced his decision to his brother, who moved in with him a little while ago. His brother thought Frank was crazy, too.

Frank said, "It's not good to sleep in a house with things that are cursed. I used God's money to pay for these things."

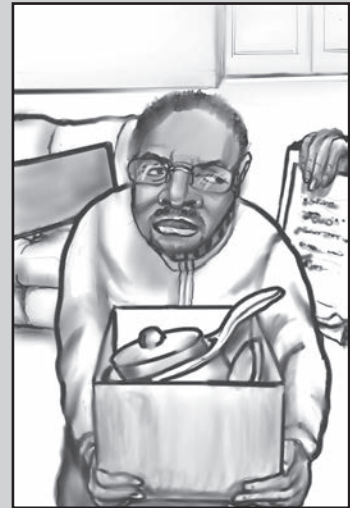
Then Frank went to the store and talked with the manager. The manager looked up Frank's bill on the computer. The manager saw that Frank didn't owe any money. The manager asked, "You want to give these things back? Are you crazy?"

Frank told the man he was fine.

The manager said, "We can't give you any money for these things." Frank didn't care. So, the manager printed out a piece of paper for Frank to sign. The paper said that Frank was giving back everything for free.

Read the rest of the story next week.

INSIDE *Story*



The paper said that Frank was giving back everything for free.



Frank Mukube

Loyalty to God: Worship in a War Zone



SABBATH—NOVEMBER 8

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Joshua 5:1–7; Joshua 5:10; Joshua 8:30, 31; Joshua 8:32–35; Joshua 18:1, 2.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘But put [make] God’s kingdom first [#1 in your life]. Do what he wants you to do. Then all those things will also be given to you’ ” (Matthew 6:33, NIV).



Joshua built an altar and worshiped the Lord while Israel was in a time of war (Joshua 8:30–35).

THIS WEEK, we will look at some stories about Israel in the Promised Land. In each of these stories, Israel promised to serve God again. Many of these stories happened when Israel was in danger. In one story, Joshua commanded all Israelite men to do a special religious act before they went to war. This act was a symbol of Israel’s loyalty to God. The Israelites did this religious act when they were in the land of the enemy (Joshua 5:1–9). In another story, the Israelites celebrated the Passover at a time when they were in danger (Joshua 5:10–12). The Passover was a celebration of the time when God helped Israel escape slavery in Egypt. Joshua also built an altar and worshiped the Lord while Israel was in a time of war (Joshua 8:30–35). Later, Joshua divided the land and gave it to the seven family groups in Israel who had no land (Joshua 18:1, 2). But Joshua set up the Lord’s holy tent first.

As we can see, Joshua made time for the Lord when he was busy or even in times of danger. Today, we often don’t make time for the Lord in our busy lives. We don’t remember to thank Him for everything He does for us. We forget to worship Him with our families each day. But deep in our hearts, we know that the time we spend with God and our loved ones is the best use of our limited time on earth.

MAKE GOD #1 (Joshua 5:1–7)

Read the story in Joshua 5:1–7. Why did the Lord command Joshua to circumcise the Israelites at this time? To circumcise means to cut off the skin from the tip of the male sex part.

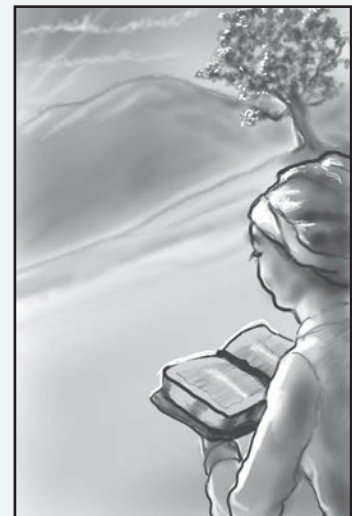
The spies explored the land and gave Joshua an encouraging report. So, we'd expect the Israelites to fight right away. But Israel's promise with God is more important than their winning the land.

Before the Israelites can fight for the land, they must make new again their relationship with the Owner of the land. The Owner is the Lord. Also, the Israelites are thankful to God for helping them cross the Jordan River. Our relationship with God should always come from our thankfulness for everything He does for us. We shouldn't try to earn His blessing with our good behavior.

Israel was about to fight an important battle. So, we would expect the whole camp to be busy getting ready for war. And they were getting ready. But not in the way we would expect. They weren't sharpening their swords or getting their horses ready. The men got circumcised. Most of the army was weak for at least three days while they healed.

The Israelites got circumcised because they wanted to celebrate their relationship with God. The people understood that the Lord was in charge of the war. God helped them win. He gave them success. That's why Jesus said, " 'But put [make] God's kingdom first [#1 in your life]. Do what he wants you to do. Then all those things will also be given to you' " (Matthew 6:33, NIV). Most of the time, everyday life fills our days with so many important things. So, it's easy for us to forget about Jesus. The most important thing we can do to remember Him is to make our relationship with Him new every day.

Think about the times you didn't spend time with God because you were so busy. Why is it so easy to do that? How can we fight against it?



The most important thing we can do to remember God is to make our relationship with Him new every day.

PASSOVER (Joshua 5:10)

The Passover was a celebration of the time when God saved Israel from the destroying angel in Egypt. Why did Joshua decide to celebrate the Passover before He went to war? Read Joshua 5:10; Exodus 12:6; Leviticus 23:5; Numbers 28:16; and Deuteronomy 16:4, 6 for the answer.

The Passover happens in the evening on the 14th day of the month. Joshua follows everything God says to do to get ready to celebrate it. The things that happen in the book of Joshua match those things that happened when Moses led Israel out of Egypt. Passover helps the Israelites remember the night of the 10th punishment (Exodus 12). During that punishment, the angel of the Lord killed all males in Egypt who were born first. But God didn't kill the Israelites who put the lamb's blood on the top and sides of their doors. Then the Lord helped His people escape from Egypt. Israel crossed the Red Sea and journeyed in the desert.

Compare the Israelites in the book of Exodus with the Israelites in the book of Joshua. In Joshua, the Israelites start in the desert. They cross the Jordan River. The Israelite males are circumcised. As we already saw, circumcised means to cut off the skin from the tip of the male sex parts. Then the Israelites celebrate the Passover. After the Passover, the Lord works a miracle. He beats the Canaanites, the same as He beat the Egyptians at the Red Sea. So, the Passover celebration in the book of Joshua is the beginning of a new time in Israel's history.

The Passover lamb was a symbol. The lamb showed that God saved Israel from slavery. The lamb also was a symbol for the Lamb of God, Jesus (John 1:29, 36; 1 Corinthians 5:7; 1 Peter 1:18, 19). Jesus saved us from being slaves to sin. At the Lord's Supper, Jesus made the Passover meal a celebration of His death (Matthew 26:26–29; 1 Corinthians 11:23–26).

Both Passover and the Lord's Supper celebrate another Bible truth: in the future, God will save His people and lead them to heaven. John talks about the special group of 144,000 saved people. The 144,000 walk on the sea of glass in front of God's throne (Revelation 4:6; Revelation 7:9, 10). In the same way, the Israelites walked on dry land across the Red Sea and the Jordan River. In heaven, we will celebrate the Lord's Supper during the marriage feast of the Lamb (Matthew 26:29; Revelation 19:9).



Both Passover and the Lord's Supper celebrate another Bible truth: in the future, God will save His people and lead them to heaven.

**ALTARS: SYMBOLS OF A NEW RELATIONSHIP
(Joshua 8:30, 31)**

What was Joshua's reason for building an altar to the Lord? Read Joshua 8:30, 31; compare with Deuteronomy 11:26–30; and Deuteronomy 27:2–10.

God told Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to build altars in the land He promised them. The altars showed that the land belonged to them. Now, the Israelites built an altar to show that God kept His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God gave their future children the land of Canaan. The Israelites built the altar, just as Moses told them to do (Deuteronomy 11:26–30; Deuteronomy 27:2–10).

Joshua 8:30–35 connects the story about war with worship. In these verses, the Israelites make their relationship with God new again. This idea is one of the most important topics in the book of Joshua. Obedience was part of the things the Israelites did to make their relationship with God new again. God commanded Joshua to lead Israel to live in obedience (Joshua 1:7). The Israelites' obedience was also part of their promise with God. We see this idea at the end of the book (Joshua 24).

Israel's wars to win the Promised Land are part of God's plan for Israel. But the people's loyalty to God's law is even more important than the wars they must fight. God's plan for Israel includes the whole human family. God's plan is to save everyone who will accept Him. Will we obey God's law? Everyone must answer this question. Our everlasting life depends on our answer.

Joshua writes a copy of the law on big stones that are painted white. These stones are different from the stones for the altar (compare with Deuteronomy 27:2–8). Many Bible thinkers believe Joshua wrote the Ten Commandments on the big white stones. These stones helped the Israelites remember their agreement with God and to obey and serve Him.

Joshua is a symbol of Jesus. Jesus came to lead people back to God. To do this work, Jesus fought for us against evil powers and won. Jesus kept God's promise. "God has made a great many promises. They are all 'Yes' because of what Christ [Jesus] has done. So through [because of] Christ we say 'Amen.' We want God to receive glory" (2 Corinthians 1:20, NIV).

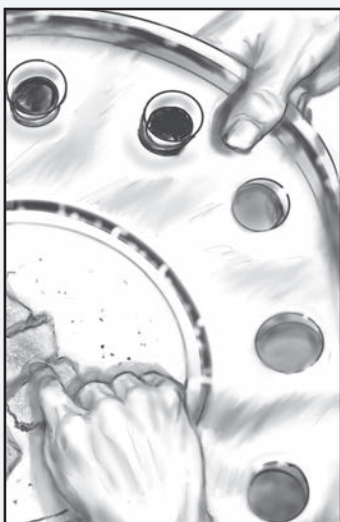
What are things that we can do, right now, to make our relationship with God new again?



Joshua writes a copy of the law on big stones that are painted white.

WRITTEN ON STONES (Joshua 8:32–35)

Read Joshua 8:32–35. What is happening in these verses? What does it mean for us today?



The Lord's Supper is a time to make new again our relationship with the Lord.

The Bible talks about the mountain of Ebal only in the book of Deuteronomy (Deuteronomy 11:29; Deuteronomy 27:4, 13) and in the book of Joshua (Joshua 8:30, 33). The Israelites said the blessings and curses on the mountains of Ebal and Gerizim. The mountain of Ebal was the mountain where the Israelites said the curses (Deuteronomy 11:29; Deuteronomy 27:4, 13). The Israelites stood on either side of the ark in front of the priests or spiritual leaders (Joshua 8:33). One group of Israelites stood in front of Ebal. The other group stood in front of Gerizim. The Israelites brought offerings that showed Jesus' future work. Jesus accepted all the curses in God's promise. Because Jesus did that, everyone who believes in Him can enjoy its blessings (Galatians 3:13; 2 Corinthians 5:21).

Why did Joshua need to write a copy of God's promise on a monument that everyone could see? Read Deuteronomy 4:31; Deuteronomy 6:12; Deuteronomy 8:11, 14; 2 Kings 17:38; and Psalm 78:7 for the answer.

We humans often forget things. The Lord's Supper gives us a special time to remember everything the Lord does for us. Also, the Lord's Supper is a time to make new again our relationship with the Lord. As a church, we can use this time to make our relationship with the Lord strong.

How often do you forget about the Lord and try to do things in your own strength and power? Why is trying to do things in our own strength so easy to do?

WANTING TO BE WITH JESUS (Joshua 18:1, 2)

Read the story in Joshua 18:1, 2. Joshua started to give land to the Israelites. In the middle of his work, Joshua stopped to do something else. What did he stop to do?

In Joshua 18, the Israelites come together at Shiloh. Joshua divides the Promised Land and gives it to the family groups of Israel who don't have land.

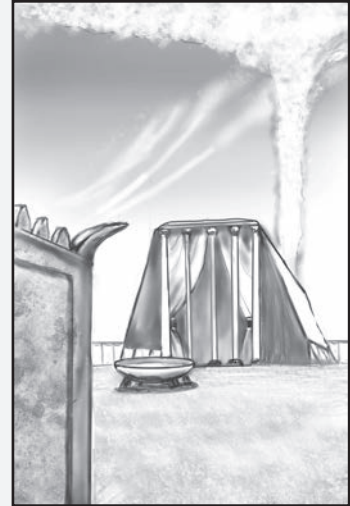
In the middle of this work, Joshua stops to set up God's holy tent. The worship of God is even more important than dividing the land!

The holy tent was proof of God's promise to live with His people (Exodus 25:8; Leviticus 26:11, 12). The book of Joshua teaches the idea that Israel won the land because God lived with His people. They had success because God lived with them. God will continue to live among His people and bless them. God will use Israel to bless everyone on earth (Genesis 12:3). The holy tent, and later God's temple, were meant to help the people remember God and obey Him.

Read Hebrews 6:19, 20; Hebrews 9:11, 12; and Hebrews 10:19–23. We don't have God living in His holy tent with us today. But what can we, as Christians, learn from Joshua's wish to make God #1 in his life and in Israel's?

The ark of God's promise helps us remember the Most Holy Place in heaven. The ark was the only piece of furniture in the Most Holy Room of the holy tent. The ark was also part of Israel's crossing. The ark was there when Israel won the Promised Land too. Joshua sets up God's holy tent in the land so that Israelites will know that to worship God is the most important part of their lives. The holy tent was God's headquarters on earth.

Today, as Christians, we live in the time when God will judge all people. We must keep our eyes on Jesus and His work for us in the Most Holy Room in heaven. As we continue to fight against the problems of our modern life, the Lord will give us strength to win. So, we must depend on Jesus and His work for us at the Cross. We must trust in the work He does now for us in heaven. Then we can hope in the time when God will live with His people again. Then He will live with us forever. (Compare with Revelation 21:3.)



The holy tent, and later God's temple, were meant to help the people remember God and obey Him.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Blessings and the Curses,” pages 499–503, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

“Moses gave the command for the Israelites to build a monument of big stones on the mountain of Ebal. The stones were covered with white paint. Then the law was written on the stones. This law included the Ten Commandments and the laws God gave to Moses that he wrote in a book. Next to this monument, the Israelites built an altar of stone. The stones weren’t cut or shaped with tools. The Israelites offered gifts to the Lord on this altar. The altar was built on the mountain of Ebal. Ebal was the mountain where the Israelites said the curses that Moses wrote in a book. Israel sinned against God’s law. Because of their sin, God was fair when He became angry with them. God should have destroyed Israel right away for their sin. But Jesus became their offering to help God accept them. The offering on the altar was a symbol for Jesus.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 500, adapted.



“Moses gave the command for the Israelites to build a monument of big stones on the mountain of Ebal.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ What does it mean to you to make God’s kingdom #1 in your life? How does this important rule change your daily life?
- ❷ Look at your answer to Wednesday’s final question. How easily do you forget the Lord in everyday life? In class, talk about why we forget God and why we have trouble remembering Him. What are some ways to help us remember?
- ❸ As Seventh-day Adventists, we believe that Jesus is working for us in heaven in these end times. How can this belief give us hope and strength? Jesus is up there asking God to help us right now (Hebrew 7:25)! How should this amazing Bible truth help us understand why His work in heaven is really good news for us?

GIVING GOD BACK HIS THINGS—PART 2

The store sent a delivery truck to Frank's house. The truck came to collect the things that Frank Mukube bought with a loan from the store. Frank already paid back the loan. But he wanted to give the stuff back to the store anyway. Frank signed a paper saying that he didn't want any of his money back. Now Frank rode in the truck to the house he rented in Namibia.

As the truck backed up to the house, Frank's property manager, who lived nearby, ran over. She asked, "Why are you moving out without telling me first?"

Frank said, "I'm not moving. I'm giving back my stuff to the store. These things aren't really mine, even if I fully paid for them. I want to give tithe and offerings again." Tithe is 10% of all the money we get.

The property manager asked, "What are you saying about tithe and offerings?"

Frank explained. The Bible teaches that people should give tithe and offerings. Frank told the manager that he didn't give any tithe for two years. He used his tithe and offerings each month to pay for everything he bought on loan from the store.

The property manager laughed at Frank.

Then the delivery truck and Frank went back to the store. The store manager watched as the bed, couch, stove, radio, television, rug, and kitchen pots were unloaded. The store manager asked, "Why are you really doing this?"

Frank said, "These things stood between me and my God because I bought them with my tithes and offerings. Now I feel so much better."

Frank did feel better. He knew that without a bed, he would sleep on the floor. Without a stove, he would need to find firewood and pots to cook supper with over a fire. But Frank was happy. Before, he felt cursed because he robbed God (Malachi 3:8, 9). But with everything back in the store, he felt peace.

That night, Frank didn't need to sleep on the floor or look for firewood or pots for supper. A friend's heart was touched when he heard about Frank's decision. The friend brought over a bed and an old stove with two pots.

Frank said, "God gave me a bed. God gave me a stove." God promises to bless us if we give Him tithe and offerings: " 'Now you must bring the whole tithe that belongs to me. Store it in my temple, so that there will be food in my house. Obey me and then see what I will do. . . . You will see how much I will bless you! You will not have enough room to store all the good things that I will give to you. I will pour blessings out of the sky like [as] rain' " (Malachi 3:10, EASY). Since that day, Frank always gives God his tithe and offerings.

INSIDE *Story*



The store manager watched as the bed, couch, stove, radio, television, rug, and kitchen pots were unloaded.



Frank Mukube

Giants of Faith: Joshua and Caleb



SABBATH—NOVEMBER 15

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Numbers 13:6; Joshua 14:6–14; Joshua 15:16–19; Joshua 19:49–51; Hebrews 12:1, 2; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Romans 12: 1, 2.

MEMORY VERSE: “Remember your leaders. They taught God’s message to you. Remember how they lived and died, and copy their faith” (Hebrews 13:7, ERV).



We need heroes we can admire who can show us how to live and be better people.

EVERY PARENT KNOWS that children learn from the examples of the people around them. Many parents feel upset when they see their children copy their bad behavior and not their good behavior. Whatever our age, we often want to do evil or wrong more than we want to do good or right. As Paul says, “I don’t understand why I act the way I do. I don’t do the good I want to do, and I do the evil I hate” (Romans 7:15, ERV). We all have felt this way, right?

From the time we are born, we copy the things we see other people do. We copy how our loved ones walk, talk, and show their feelings. We learn to do the most basic things in life this way. As adults, we continue to need good examples. We need heroes we can admire who can show us how to live and be better people. Maybe these people aren’t perfect. But their spiritual lives help us to improve our own lives. That’s what makes these people “giants” whose faith we can look up to and admire.

This week, we look at the personal examples of two giants of faith in the book of Joshua: Caleb and Joshua. What made these men stand out? How did they bless God’s people during one of the most important times in Israel’s history?

MEN OF FAITH (Numbers 13:6)

Who was Caleb? Read Numbers 13:6, 30–32 and Joshua 14:6, 14 for the answer.

The name Caleb comes from the Hebrew word “keleb.” “Keleb” means dog in the Hebrew language. In the Old Testament, “keleb” always means something bad. But in other writings outside the Bible, the word “keleb” is used in letters and hymns to mean a servant’s courage. The word “keleb” is also used in these hymns and letters to mean a servant who is loyal to his master. Caleb’s life showed that he was loyal to his Lord.

Caleb wasn’t afraid to speak the truth, even when most of the spies didn’t agree with him. Caleb also wasn’t afraid to speak the truth when the Israelites wanted to kill him. What do these things teach us about Caleb? Read Numbers 14:6–10, 21–25; Numbers 26:65; and Numbers 32:12 to answer the question.

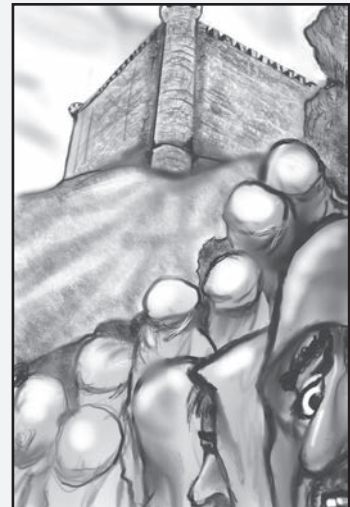
Who were some of the important Israelite leaders during the time of Caleb and Joshua? These leaders were named Shammua, Shaphat, Igal, Palti, Gaddiel, Gaddi, Ammiel, Sethur, Nahbi, and Geuel. Do you know who any of these men are?

Not really, right?

Why? Because these are the names of the other ten spies that Moses sent to explore the land of Canaan. We don’t remember their names because they didn’t show faith. They weren’t brave. They gave Moses a lying report. These ten spies said that Israel couldn’t win the Promised Land. These spies compared Israelites to grasshoppers and said the Canaanites were giants. These men were afraid when they saw the strong and tall walls around the Canaanite cities.

Caleb was older than Joshua, so he speaks first. Caleb is filled with faith. He reports that Israel can win the Promised Land. Caleb wasn’t afraid to stand for what he knew was right. He wasn’t afraid when the other ten spies were against him. He wasn’t afraid when the Israelites wanted to kill him for speaking the truth (Numbers 14:10).

What do you do when most people don’t agree with you? Do you go along with them? Or do you say the truth?



The ten spies were afraid when they saw the strong and tall walls around the Canaanite cities.

GIVE ME THIS HILL COUNTRY (Joshua 14:6–14)

How did Caleb and Joshua show their faith? What does it mean to follow the Lord fully? Read Joshua 14:6–14; Numbers 14:24; Numbers 32:12; Deuteronomy 1:36; and Luke 6:45 for the answers.



Caleb understood that everything depended on faith.

Caleb remembered the promise the Lord gave him: he would enter the Promised Land (Numbers 14:24). Forty years later, Caleb talks about his report on the land all those years ago. Caleb gave Moses a true report. Caleb said, “ ‘It was in my heart,’ ” about the land (Joshua 14:7, NLV). Caleb believed Israel could win the land with God’s help.

The report of the other ten spies filled the Israelites with fear. But Caleb trusted in the promises of God. Caleb talks about the ten spies who went with him to Canaan: “ ‘My brothers who went up with me made the heart of the people weak with fear. But I followed the Lord my God with all my heart’ ” (Joshua 14:8, NLV). As we see from this verse, Caleb gave his whole heart to the Lord.

Almost the same words, “with all my heart,” are said two more times (Joshua 14:9, 14, NLV). The Bible says these words to show us that Caleb was a man of faith. That’s why the Lord said, “ ‘My servant Caleb has a different spirit. He follows me completely’ ” (Numbers 14:24, ICB). Caleb’s spirit made him different from the other ten spies. Now, Caleb was 85 years old. He continued to be an example of what the Lord can do with people who give their hearts fully to Him.

God promised to give land to each of the 12 family groups in Israel’s land. Caleb understood that everything depended on faith. If the Israelites had a lot of faith to fight for the land, then the Lord would help them win. So, the more faith they had, the more land God gave them. We must act on our faith in God’s promises. That’s why Caleb says to Joshua, “ ‘So give me the hill country that the LORD promised me that day long ago. At that time you heard that the strong Anakites lived there and the cities were very big and well protected. But now, maybe the LORD will be with me, and I will take that land just as the LORD said’ ” (Joshua 14:12, ERV). The word “maybe” can mean fear and doubt. But it often means hope that something good will happen (Genesis 16:2; Numbers 22:6, 11; Numbers 23:3).

What “small” things can keep us from following God?

THE POWER OF EXAMPLE (Joshua 15:16–19)

Read the story in Joshua 15:16–19. (Also read Judges 1:13 and Judges 3:7–11.) What do these verses teach us about the power of example? How are the younger Israelites copying Caleb’s spirit of courage and faith?

In this story, Caleb offers his daughter, Achsah, in marriage to the man who wins the land of Debir in battle. Othniel fights and wins the city. So, Caleb gives Achsah to Othniel to be his wife. This story is important. It shows Caleb’s courage and faith. Caleb is ready and willing to do new things for the Lord.

This story also shows that the younger Israelites followed the example of Caleb and Joshua. As the older Israelites finish their work on earth for God, the younger Israelites are ready to continue God’s work.

Achsah shows the same faith and courage that her father showed. Achsah continues to follow Caleb’s example. She believes in God’s promise to help Israel win the land.

The land is the Lord’s gift to Israel. But Israel must fight to win the land. The people must show faith and courage in God’s promises to give the land to them in battle. Achsah is a symbol of the Jewish mothers later on who come to Jesus. These women have faith. Jesus’ followers try to send them away. But these women will not leave until Jesus blesses them and their families.

Read Luke 18:1–5. What lesson do these verses teach us?

We must help young people get ready to serve God when our work for Him is done. God trusts us with this special work. Think about what we must do to help them get ready. What can we do to train today’s youth to be tomorrow’s leaders? How important is our example to the success of this work?



Caleb gives Achsah to Othniel to be his wife.

A HERO WITH NO PRIDE IN HIS HEART (Joshua 19:49–51)



Joshua could have asked for or chosen a better piece of land. But Joshua has no pride in his heart. He chooses to live a simple life.

God promises to give Caleb and Joshua land. Caleb gets his land before Joshua does. Joshua gets his land after everyone else in Israel gets theirs. First, Joshua gives land to the 12 family groups of Israel. Now the time finally comes for the Israelites to give Joshua his land.

Why does Joshua get his land last? What does that information tell us? Read Joshua 19:49–51 for the answer.

Joshua gets a city named Timnath-serah. This name is made from two words. The first word, “Timnath” comes from a word that means a “part” or “territory.” The second word comes from the Hebrew word “serach.” “Serach” means something leftover. So, the name of Joshua’s city can be written as “the leftover part of the territory.”

What does this name tell us about Joshua? Joshua waits until all of the Israelites get their land. Then Joshua chooses for himself. Joshua doesn’t choose one of the territories that is filled with cities. Joshua doesn’t choose a rich or beautiful city. He chooses a city that may be ruined. So, he will need to rebuild it.

Also, Timnath-serah was located near Shiloh, where God’s holy tent is. So, Joshua’s choice shows us where his heart is. He wants to be near God. Joshua could have asked for or chosen a better piece of land. But Joshua has no pride in his heart. He chooses to live a simple life. He knows what is important. His choice helps us remember King David’s words:

“I ask only one thing from the Lord.

This is what I want:

Let me live in the Lord’s house
all my life.

Let me see the Lord’s beauty.

Let me look around in his Temple” (Psalm 27:4, ICB).

**What lessons can you learn from Joshua’s spirit?
How can you have a heart empty of all pride?**

THE LIVES OF BIBLE HEROES (Hebrews 12:1, 2)

The lives of Bible heroes can help us grow strong in faith. Of course, Jesus is the best example. How does thinking about the life of Jesus and His teachings change us? Read Hebrews 12:1, 2 and 2 Corinthians 3:18 for the answer.

Ellen G. White talks about what happens to us when we think about the love of Jesus: “When we look at Jesus, we will understand God better. God’s love changes us. When we look at Him, we will become good. Love for other people will fill our hearts. Our thoughts and feelings will become the same as God’s thoughts and feelings. We will become like Him in our hearts. When we become more like God in our hearts, we will know Him more and more. We will fellowship with heaven more. God will give us more knowledge and wisdom.”—Ellen G. White, *Christ’s Object Lessons*, page 355, adapted.

Read Romans 12:1, 2. What two powers are fighting against each other for our attention? How can we be sure to choose the right side?

In Romans 12, Paul talks about two powers that fight against each other. On the one hand, this life, with all its false ideas and fun, tries to force us to accept its ideas and habits. These things are outside us at first. But they try to change us on the inside.

On the other hand, the Holy Spirit changes us from the inside. Think of the way a caterpillar becomes a beautiful butterfly. The change happens from the inside first. The Holy Spirit works to change us in the same way. He starts with our hearts. But if we want this change to happen, we need to give our lives to God first. We must ask Him to continue to do the good work in us that He already started (Philippians 1:6). In the end, we must make a choice, each moment, to give God’s Spirit full control over our lives.



**“When we look at Jesus,
we will understand
God better.”**



“Now, at almost 80 years old, Caleb continued to be healthy and strong.”

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “Caleb’s faith now was the same as when he gave his report forty years ago. Caleb’s report didn’t agree with the evil report of the ten spies. Caleb believed God’s promise. God promised to give Israel the land of Canaan. So, Caleb trusted in the Lord and followed Him fully. Caleb wandered for 40 years in the desert with Israel. Caleb suffered with Israel. But Caleb didn’t complain. Caleb praised God for showing Him mercy. God kept him alive in the desert when almost all the other Israelites died. Israel suffered hard times, danger, and disease during their time in the desert. But Caleb lived many more years. The Lord spared Caleb’s life during the time Israel fought wars to win the land of Canaan. Now, at almost 80 years old, Caleb continued to be healthy and strong. Caleb didn’t ask for land that Israel already won in war. Caleb asked for the land that the ten spies said no one could win. With God’s help, Caleb would remove this land from the giants who caused Israel to lose faith. Caleb didn’t fight for his honor or fame. This brave old warrior wanted to give the Israelites an example that honored God. Caleb wanted to encourage Israel to fight to win the land that their fathers said no one could win.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pages 512, 513, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① How much courage does it take to speak the truth when other people won’t do it? Why is it so hard to be brave? How much courage do you need to talk about your faith? How can we avoid being rude and unkind when we stand for what we believe is right?
- ② Share in your class some examples of faith from your church or community that changed your life for the better. How did their stories help make you more like God in your heart?
- ③ Think about the power that the media or TV has in our life. How can we use media for good? At the same time, what are its dangers? How do we keep media and TV from hurting our lives?
- ④ How is Joshua an example to you of a good leader?

THE MAN NO ONE EXPECTED TO DO GOD'S WORK

Kim Sun was surprised when the young man slammed the door shut in his face.

Sun was a 19-year-old student from South Korea. Sun went from door-to-door to invite people to Bible meetings in the Philippines. Many people were polite to Sun and his friends when the students knocked on their doors. But the young man at this house was mean and nasty. The young man didn't answer when the students asked him if they could come in for a visit. The young man just slammed the door shut.

Sun felt ashamed and upset. The experience didn't bother the other students. Sun didn't understand why. Sun suggested that they come back the next day, on Tuesday. The Bible meetings were being held all week, including the Sabbath.

On Tuesday, the students knocked on the door again. The same young man came to the door. He remembered them from the day before. The young man looked ashamed. He invited the students in. He said, "I'm sorry that I closed the door yesterday."

The students talked with the young man about Jesus' love. They invited the young man to the meetings. The students met with the young man again on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. On Saturday, the young man decided to give his heart to Jesus and get baptized.

The young man said, "I love Jesus. I want a new life."

Sun was surprised. As Sun watched the baptism, he thought, "This man changed so much. He is so different from when I met him on Monday. Can someone really change so much?"

But what happened to this man happened to Sun, too. No one, including Sun, expected Sun to become a Bible worker. Sun didn't come to the Philippines to baptize people. In the past, Sun lived to please himself in South Korea. Then his parents put a stop to that. They sent Sun to the Philippines to learn English and to become a nurse. Sun's parents wanted him to go to the United States to work after he finished school.

Sun's parents sent him to the Adventist University of the Philippines. There, Sun was surprised to see that his classmates went to church on Saturday. Sun thought that all Christians worshiped on Sunday. Sun went to a Korean-language church at his school. Young people in the church helped the pastors get ready for the Bible meetings. Sun didn't know much English. He didn't know much about the Bible. But he joined the students in going door-to-door to invite people to the meetings. That's how Sun first became a worker for God without planning to.

Kim Sun is a manager for the 1,000 Missionary Movement, in Silang, Philippines. The headquarters were built with help of the 13th Sabbath Offering from 1996. Read more next week.

INSIDE *Story*



As Sun watched the baptism, he thought, "This man changed so much."



Kim Sun

Something to Hope For



SABBATH—NOVEMBER 22

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Genesis 2:15; Exodus 3:8; Joshua 13:1–7; Leviticus 25:1–5, 8–13; Jeremiah 24:6.

MEMORY VERSE: “Prisoners, go home! Now you have something to hope for. I am telling you now, I am coming back to you” (Zechariah 9:12, ERV).



Joshua 13–21 contain long lists. These lists talk about the land that God gave to the different family groups in Israel.

JOSHUA 13–21 contains long lists. These lists talk about the land that God gave to the different family groups in Israel. For the modern reader, these lists may seem boring. But the lists teach us a very important Bible truth. God made a promise to give His people land. The lists are proof that God kept His promise. At the same time, the Israelites worked with the Lord to make those promises happen.

Yes, the land was a gift from God. God promised this land to Israel's fathers. But Israel had a part to do, too: “ ‘I have given you all this land. Go in and take it as your own. The LORD promised he would give the land to your fathers. He promised it to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He also said he would give it to their children after them’ ” (Deuteronomy 1:8, NIV).

This week, we will look at the Bible truths that the Promised Land teaches us. We will try to understand what these Bible truths mean for us today.

EDEN AND CANAAN (Genesis 2:15)

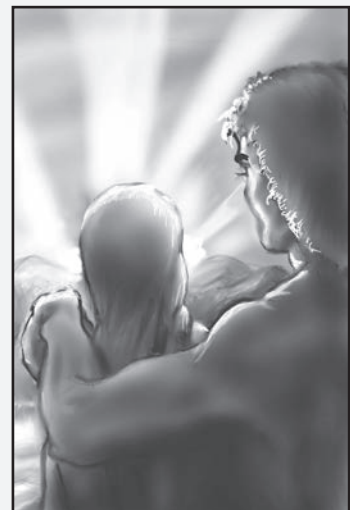
What happened to the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve sinned? Read Genesis 2:15 and Genesis 3:17–24 for the answer.

God gave Adam and Eve a beautiful garden home. God filled the Garden of Eden with beauty. The garden gave Adam and Eve plenty of food and water. Adam and Eve met with God in the garden. God was their teacher. The Garden of Eden was the same as a school. The garden taught Adam and Eve about God and His love. The garden also taught Adam and Eve about God's plan for their lives. When Adam and Eve sinned, they broke their relationship with God. Their sin changed their relationship with the garden home too. Adam and Eve lost their garden home. As punishment, God made Adam and Eve leave the garden. So, Eden is a symbol of the life God meant for Israel to enjoy. The Promised Land will help Israel discover the joys that humans lost in Eden.

What did Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob think about God's promise to give them land? Read Genesis 13:14, 15; Genesis 26:3, 24; and Genesis 28:13 for the answer. What promise about land has God made to us? How does this promise give us hope? (Read Hebrews 6:11–15 for the answer.)

Abraham entered the land that God showed him. Abraham had faith in God's promise. He believed God would give him and his future children the land someday. Abraham's children waited for 400 years for God to keep His promise. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob didn't really own the land. The land belonged to God. The Garden of Eden belonged to God too. Adam and Eve didn't do anything to buy or own the land. Israel didn't do anything to earn the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 9:4–6). God gave them the Promised Land as a gift.

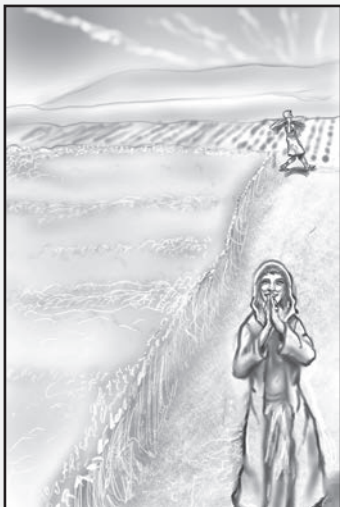
Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lived with hope in God's promises. God kept His promise to them and gave the land to their future children. As Jesus' followers, we also have promises. God promises us better things than He gave Israel (Hebrews 8:6). God will keep His promises to us. But first we must "copy the example of those people who continue to trust God. They continue to be patient when trouble happens to them. People like [the same as] that receive [get] what God has promised to his people" (Hebrews 6:12, EASY).



God gave Adam and Eve a beautiful garden home. God filled the Garden of Eden with beauty.

THE LAND AS A GIFT (Exodus 3:8)

What was the special relationship between God, Israel, and the Promised Land? Read Exodus 3:8; Leviticus 20:22; Leviticus 25:23; Numbers 13:27; Deuteronomy 4:1, 25, 26; Deuteronomy 6:3; and Psalm 24:1 for the answer.



The Israelites depended on rain for their crops. Only God could control the weather. So, the land helped Israel remember all the time that they depended on God for life.

Land is more than a place to live. Land helps people to know who they are as a people. What you do for a living depends on where you live. Slaves had no land. They belonged nowhere. A slave worked hard for no pay. Someone else collected and enjoyed the pay for the work the slave did. So, owning land was important. When people owned land, they were no longer slaves. That's why the land was so important to the Israelites after God helped them escape slavery. The land helped them to understand who they were, as God's people.

God, Israel, and the land had a special relationship. God gave Israel the land as a gift. The Israelites could own the land while they obeyed the Lord and respected the rules of the agreement between them. In other words, Israel couldn't own the land and have its blessings without God's blessing.

The land also helped Israel better understand God's law and His love. Because the Israelites lived in the land, they always remembered that God kept His promises. Without God's help, Israel wouldn't be a people, and they wouldn't have any land. When the Israelites were in Egypt, the Nile River helped give water to their crops. But Canaan was different. The Israelites depended on rain for their crops. Only God could control the weather. So, the land helped the Israelites remember all the time that they depended on God for life.

Yes, God gave Israel the land. But God was really the Owner. God is the real Owner of the whole earth (Psalm 24:1). So, He can give the land to Israel or remove it. The same is true for us today. Because God is the Owner of the land, we are all really strangers, pilgrims, or visitors. In other words, we are not the owners of the land. We are only guests on God's land.

Read 1 Peter 2:11 and Hebrews 11:9–13 and then answer the questions. What does it mean to you to live as a visitor on this earth? What does it mean to you that your final home will be the earth made new?

WINNING THE LAND (Joshua 13:1–7)

Yes, the land was a gift from God. But what were some of the things Israel needed to do to win the land and keep it? Read Joshua 13:1–7 for the answer.

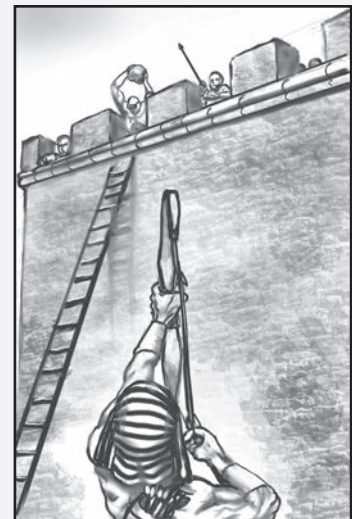
The Israelites lived as slaves for hundreds of years. So, they didn't have the military skills of the Egyptians to win the land in war. The Egyptians were skilled fighters with trained armies. But even with their big armies, the Egyptians never completely won the land of Canaan. The Egyptians couldn't break down the walls of the Canaanite cities. Now God tells the Israelites, who were ex-slaves, to win the land that their Egyptian masters couldn't get full control of! If the Israelites win, they will win only because God helps them. They won't win because of their own effort.

Joshua 13–21 talks about the land that God gives to the different family groups of Israel. The lists of land tell us who gets what land. The lists also show us the land that Israel must win. The Israelites can safely live in the land God gave them because He owns it. The first half of the book of Joshua shows us how God gave Israel the land. God took the land from the Canaanites and gave it to Israel. The second half of the book tells us how the Israelites settled in the land and made their homes there.

The story of Israel in the Promised Land teaches us about God's saving mercy. We are the same as Israel because we can't do anything to earn God's gift (Ephesians 2:8, 9). We can't save ourselves. We need the gift of God's saving mercy. Israel didn't do anything to earn the land (Deuteronomy 9:5.) In the same way, we can't earn God's mercy with our good behavior.

God expected the Israelites to obey Him. They needed to obey Him to live in the land He gave them. In the same way, we must obey the Lord to be citizens of God's kingdom. God gave Israel the land because of His mercy. Because of God's mercy, we get a wonderful gift too: He will save us. But we can lose this gift, if we aren't careful.

What must Christians do today to enjoy the promises God gave them? Read Philippians 2:12 and Hebrews 12:28 for the answer.



The Egyptians were skilled fighters with trained armies. But even with their big armies, the Egyptians never completely won the land of Canaan. The Egyptians couldn't break down the walls of the Canaanite cities.

THE YEAR OF JUBILEE: A SPECIAL TIME OF REST (Leviticus 25:1–5, 8–13)



Our Father in heaven wants His children to share with people who don't have as much as we do.

The land was very important to God's people, Israel. God divided the land between the 12 family groups of Israel (Numbers 34:13–18). God divided up the land so that every family group could own part of it. This plan kept the land from belonging to only a few rich and powerful people.

Why did God ask the Israelites to celebrate the Year of Jubilee or special time of rest? Read Leviticus 25:1–5, 8–13 for the answer.

In Egypt, the citizens often lost their land. Then they became the slaves of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. God didn't want that to happen to the Israelites. So, no one outside the family group could own a family's land. In God's plan, no one could sell the land. You could rent your land to someone until the time of the next Year of Jubilee. So, if someone needed to sell his land, his family members must try to buy back the land before the Jubilee (Leviticus 25:25).

The gift of the land helps us to see what is in God's heart. Our Father in heaven wants His children to share with people who don't have as much as we do. Every seven years, God commanded His people to use their land to feed other people. When we own the land and use it to help other people, we learn to respect them. We learn to be kind to people who are poor and suffering.

God also gave the land to His people to teach them to work hard. God wanted His people to have a new start too.

The Good News about Jesus also gives us a new start. The Good News shows us that, rich or poor, we are all the same in God's eyes. Every one of us needs God's mercy.

Sad to say, Israel didn't honor God's commands. Hundreds of years later, God finally did what He warned the Israelites He would do. He removed His people from the land that He gave them (2 Chronicles 36:20, 21).

How do the Sabbath and the rules God gave Israel about buying back the land teach us that we are all the same in God's eyes? How can the Sabbath help us to say "no" to the evil habit of buying too much?

GETTING BACK THE LAND (Jeremiah 24:6)

Read Jeremiah 24:6; Jeremiah 31:16; Ezekiel 11:17; Ezekiel 28:25; and Ezekiel 37:14, 25. What promise did God make about Israel's coming back to the Promised Land? How did God keep that promise?

When the Israelites were carried away to Babylon, they learned an important truth about their relationship with God. Their relationship with God didn't depend on their living in the Promised Land. God continued to be their God, even while they weren't in the land. When the Israelites confessed their sins, they looked to the Lord with all their hearts. Then God kept His promise again. He brought His people back to their land. Their coming back to their country showed that God accepted them again.

However, God never promised that the Israelites would continue to live in the land forever if they sinned (Deuteronomy 28:63, 64; Joshua 23:13, 15; 1 Kings 9:7; 2 Kings 17:23; Jeremiah 12:10–12). At the same time, the prophets, God's special messengers, announced that a future King would come from the family line of David. This future King would give the Israelites back their glory. He would help them to enjoy success as a people again (Isaiah 9:6, 7; Zechariah 9:9, 16). God kept this promise in the life and death of Jesus. Jesus woke up from the dead to show Israel that He was God's promised Savior.

In the New Testament, we also are told that God kept His promises to Israel when He sent Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 1:20; Romans 15:8). When we understand this Bible truth, we will see the Promised Land as a symbol of spiritual blessings. God plans to give us these blessings both now (Ephesians 2:6) and in the future.

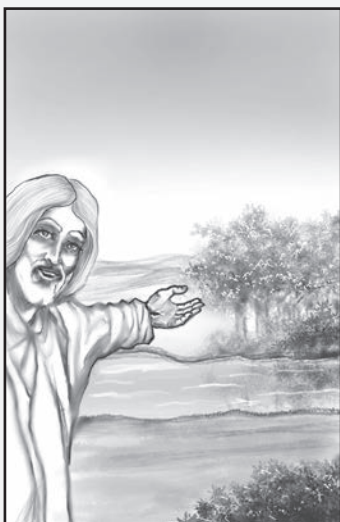
When we live on the new earth, God will keep His promise of rest. We will live on earth with no more sin and evil. So, as Christians, our hope comes from Jesus' promise that He will come back. After 1,000 years in heaven, Jesus will start His kingdom on the new earth. When that happens, God will keep all His promises to us about the land.

Read John 14:1–3; Titus 2:13; and Revelation 21:1–3. What hope do these verses give us? Why does Jesus' death give us proof that we can trust God to keep all His future promises to us?



**So, as Christians,
our hope comes from
Jesus' promise
that He will come back.**

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Controversy Ended,” pages 672–678, in *The Great Controversy*.



“The Bible has a name for what God promises to give us. The Bible names this gift ‘a country’ (Hebrews 11:14–16, KJV). In this country, Jesus is the same as a Shepherd who leads His flock to the living waters.”

“When we enter the city, we shall be saved. Then we may rejoice that we are saved. But until then, we need to remember what Paul said: ‘So be careful that none of you fails to receive [get] it [God’s promise]’ [Hebrews 4:1, NIV]. The Israelites knew about the land of Canaan. They sang songs about the land. They rejoiced at the promise that they would enter the land. But their knowledge, songs, and joy didn’t bring them into the Promised Land or its olive gardens. The Israelites needed to have faith in God. They needed to obey Him. They need to do their part. Then God could keep His promise to them to give them the land.”—Ellen G. White, *The Youth’s Instructor*, February 17, 1898, adapted.

“The Bible has a name for what God promises to give us. The Bible names this gift ‘a country’ (Hebrews 11:14–16, KJV). In this country, Jesus is the same as a Shepherd who leads His flock to the living waters. The tree of life grows new fruit every month here. The leaves of the tree will heal and help God’s people. In this country, many streams flow. The water is clear, the same as glass. Next to the streams, trees shade the paths that God will make for His people to walk on. This country is filled with plains and hills that are very beautiful. Behind them are tall mountains. God’s people have been pilgrims and wanderers for a very long time. Now they will make their homes on the plains. They will live next to the living streams.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 675, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① The Promised Land is a symbol for the wonderful life that Jesus promised us (John 10:10). What does the Promised Land teach us about God’s plan to save us?
- ② What does it mean to be a citizen of God’s kingdom? As members of this kingdom, how should we live?
- ③ As humans, we often feel disappointed when people break their promises to us. Why can you trust God’s promises?
- ④ How can we make the promises of a new earth real now?

NOT THE BEST WAY TO SHARE JESUS

Kim Sun, a South Korean teenager, studied at the Adventist University of the Philippines. Not long ago, Sun invited a man to Bible meetings. The man got baptized. Sun wondered if he could earn a living knocking on doors and inviting people to Bible meetings. Sun wasn't Seventh-day Adventist. This experience was his first time going door-to-door.

Sun talked with a pastor who went door-to-door with Sun and the other students. Sun asked, "What is the name of the work we are doing? Is this community work?"

The pastor smiled. "No, it's work for God or mission work."

Sun asked, "Can someone do this work full-time?"

The pastor said, "Yes. It's called being a Bible worker."

Sun asked, "Can I have this job?"

The pastor said, "Yes. The pay for this job is very little. But you can do it."

Sun asked, "How do I start?"

The pastor answered, "You'll need to change your studies from nursing to religion."

Sun said, "Oh. I'll need to ask my mom first."

Sun was studying in the Philippines because his parents wanted him to do something special with his life. Before Sun came to the Philippines, he lived to please himself.

Sun asked his mother if he could study religion and not nursing. He wanted to serve the church. Mother said he could study religion if he also finished his nursing studies.

Sun said, "But I don't really like nursing."

Then Mother had an idea. She didn't want her son to be rich. She wanted him to be a good person. She said, "If you study religion, can you drink or smoke?"

When he said no, she said, "Then please change your studies!"

Sun loved studying religion. He learned the Bible truth about the seventh-day Sabbath. He read the end-time messages about Daniel and Revelation. Then he got baptized.

When Sun went home for vacations, he tried to ask his parents to accept his new beliefs. Sun said, "Mom and Dad, sit down and let me talk to you. Sunday is not the Sabbath day. Saturday is the Sabbath. Do you know Daniel's explanation about King Nebuchadnezzar's dream?"

Sun didn't understand why his parents didn't want to learn about Bible truth. He was upset when Mother finally asked him to stop preaching. She said, "You take your God. I'll take mine!"

Sun said, "But they're the same God! We must obey the Bible."

Read more about Sun next week.

INSIDE *Story*

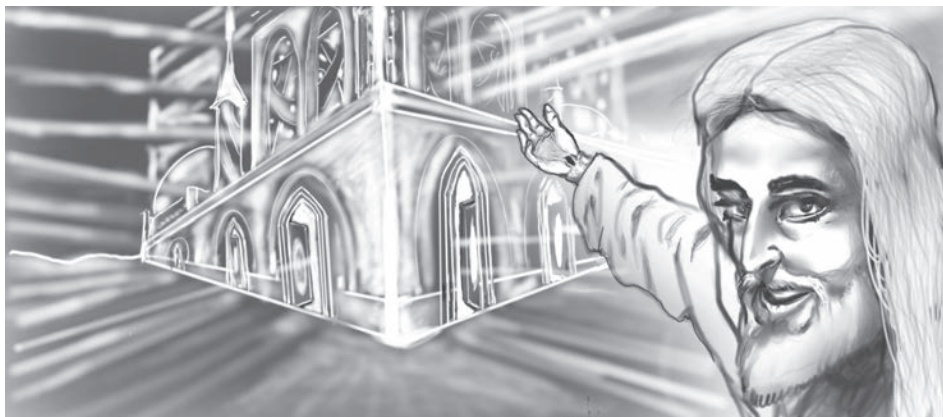


**"You take your God.
I'll take mine!"**



Kim Sun

The Real Joshua



SABBATH—NOVEMBER 29

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Romans 5:14; Matthew 2:15; Joshua 1:1–3; Hebrews 3:7–4:11; 1 Timothy 1:18.

MEMORY VERSE: “Those things happened to them as examples for us. They were written down to warn us. That’s because we are living at the time when God’s work is being completed” (1 Corinthians 10:11, NIV).



The land of Canaan is a symbol of our hope in a new earth. The work that the priests or religious leaders did in the holy tent was a symbol, too.

IN THE BOOK OF JOSHUA, Joshua the man is a symbol. He stands for something much more than himself. We see this important rule all through the Bible. The land of Canaan is a symbol for our hope in a new earth. The work that the priests or religious leaders did in the holy tent was a symbol, too. Their work showed us the work that Jesus does for us in heaven: “But now Christ [came] as our special priest. He brings us the good things that [we now have]. He [went] into God’s own place in heaven. That [place] is a greater [more perfect] and much better tent than the old tabernacle [holy tent]. No person made this tent. It does not belong to this world [earth] at all” (Hebrews 9:11, EASY).

We must ask the questions: If Joshua is a symbol, what does that symbol mean? How can we be sure our answer is correct? What important rules help us to learn the meaning of symbols? What do these symbols mean for us in the end times?

This week, we will look at important rules for understanding the meaning of Bible symbols. We will study how the life of Joshua is a symbol for the work of the coming Savior. The life of Joshua also is a symbol for the work of the church and for things that will happen in the end times.

BIBLE SYMBOLS (Romans 5:14)

Study these verses about Bible symbols: Romans 5:14; 1 Corinthians 10:1–13; Hebrews 8:5; and Hebrews 9:23. What do these verses tell us about symbols and what they mean?

Some of these Bible verses use the word “copy.” The things on earth in the Old Testament holy tent were copies of the real things in heaven. So, an Old Testament copy is a symbol for someone or something else that will happen in the future.

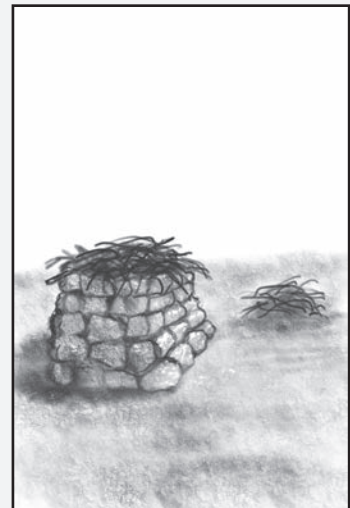
When we study Bible copies or symbols, we start with persons, happenings, or things in the Old Testament. We ask the question, How do these things show us Jesus and other Bible truths in the New Testament? God uses symbols in the Old Testament to help us understand Bible truths in the New Testament.

We must understand an important Bible truth about symbols. New Testament writers didn’t make up meanings for Old Testament symbols when they wrote. God gave the Old Testament symbols their meanings from the start. New Testament writers showed how the things that these symbols stood for happened in their time.

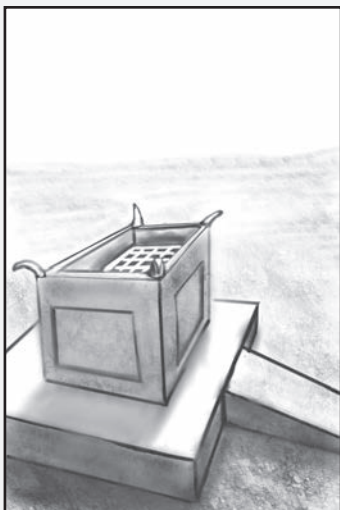
Look at what the Old Testament writers said about King David. Then look at what the New Testament writers say about him. What lessons do these verses teach us about symbols and how they work in the Bible?

- a. David: the man (Psalm 22:1, 14–18)**
- b. David: a symbol of future promises (Jeremiah 23:5; Isaiah 9:5, 6; Isaiah 11:1–5)**
- c. David’s words in the New Testament (John 19:24)**

When we look at these verses, we learn how the Old Testament helps us to understand the symbols in the New Testament. New Testament writers used the Old Testament symbols to teach Bible truth (2 Peter 1:12, NKJV) about Jesus and His work.



New Testament writers used the Old Testament symbols to teach Bible truth (2 Peter 1:12, NKJV) about Jesus and His work.

SYMBOLS AND THEIR MEANINGS (Matthew 2:15)

We can see these Old Testament symbols and their meanings all through the Bible.

No one is allowed to decide what a Bible symbol is or what it means in the New Testament. The Bible itself shows us the symbols and what they mean. The Bible also gives us important rules to help us understand these symbols and their meanings.

Each Old Testament symbol can have three different meanings in the New Testament. Three questions can help us understand what these meanings are: (1) What does the symbol show us about Jesus' life? (2) What does the symbol show us about the experience of the church? (3) What does the symbol show us about the end times?

We can see these Old Testament symbols and their meanings all through the Bible. These symbols and their meanings are very helpful. They show readers how to understand the Bible. They show us what the Bible teaches about Jesus, His saving plan, and the hope we have in Him.

Look at three Old Testament symbols below: (1) Israel, (2) the Exodus, and (3) God's holy tent. The Exodus was the time when God helped Israel to escape from slavery in Egypt. What do each of the three symbols teach us about Jesus, the church, and the end times?

- 1. How is Israel a symbol of**
 - a. Jesus (Matthew 2:15);**
 - b. the church (Galatians 6:16);**
 - c. the end times (Revelation 7:4–8, 14)?**
- 2. How is Exodus a symbol of**
 - a. Jesus (Matthew 2:19–21);**
 - b. the church (2 Corinthians 6:17);**
 - c. the end times (Revelation 18:4)?**
- 3. How is God's holy tent a symbol of**
 - a. Jesus (John 1:14; John 2:21, Matthew 26:61);**
 - b. the church (1 Corinthians 3:16, 17; 2 Corinthians 6:16);**
 - c. the end times (Revelation 3:12; Revelation 11:19; Revelation 21:3; Revelation 21:22)?**

"God is the real Writer of the Bible. So, the different parts of the Bible are in agreement. . . . All Bible teachings will agree too. Our explanations of the Bible must agree with what the Bible teaches about a topic."—*Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, page 65, adapted.

JOSHUA, THE SYMBOL (Joshua 1:1–3)

How are the lives of Moses and Joshua the same? In what ways is Joshua a symbol for Moses? Read Exodus 3:1, 2; Joshua 1:1–3; Numbers 13:1, 2; Joshua 2:1; Exodus 3:5; and Joshua 5:15 for the answers.

As we saw in Lesson 1, Joshua is the same as a ‘new’ Moses. Joshua also does many of the things that Moses did during the Exodus. The Exodus was the time when God helped Israel escape from slavery in Egypt. What else is the same between Moses and Joshua? Both Moses and Joshua meet with God. During their meetings, God gives each man his orders. Under the leadership of both men, Israel becomes famous. The countries around Israel are filled with fear. Moses leads Israel across the Red Sea. Joshua leads Israel across the Jordan. Both leaders celebrate the Passover. The Passover is the time when God saves the Israelites from the Egyptians. Both leaders understand that God wants all Israelite males to be circumcised. To be circumcised means to cut off the skin at the tip of the male sex parts. Manna or bread from heaven started to fall in the time of Moses. The manna stopped falling with Joshua’s leadership. God commands both Moses and Joshua to remove their shoes. When both men hold out their hands, Israel wins their fights. Moses tells the Israelites how to divide the land and how to set up cities of safety. Joshua divides the land and sets up the cities. Both Moses and Joshua give a goodbye sermon to Israel. At the end of their work for God, both men help Israel make the promise with God new again.

Moses says that God will send a special messenger the same as Himself. Who is this special messenger? How does Joshua fit into this promise? Read Deuteronomy 18:15–19; Deuteronomy 34:10–12; John 1:21; Acts 3:22–26; and Acts 7:37.

Joshua is part of God’s answer to the promise He gives Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15, 18). But only the Savior can keep the promise that Moses makes. Jesus knew the Father (John 1:14, 18). The Savior showed the truth about the Father (Luke 10:22; John 14:6; Matthew 22:16). God gave Jesus His words to say (John 14:24). So, the lives of Moses and Joshua give us symbols that help us understand Jesus’ life.



Both the lives of Moses and Joshua give us symbols that help us understand Jesus’ life.

THE NEW JOSHUA (Hebrews 3:7–4:11)



Because of His baptism, Jesus is the Warrior who will fight the wars of God against evil.

The wars that Joshua fought were real wars. These wars are an important part of Israel's history. God used these wars to help the Israelites settle in the Promised Land. There, the Israelites will enjoy peace and start a new government. The government will honor God's law.

Later, Old Testament writers show that the Savior will do the same thing that Joshua did. Isaiah shows us that the promised Savior "will give the land that is now ruined back to its owners" (Isaiah 49:8, ICB). This verse shows us that the Savior will be the new Joshua. Just as Joshua gave the land to the Israelites, the Savior will give the new Israel all the gifts that God promised the church.

Read Hebrews 3:7–4:11. The Old Testament shows us that Joshua is the new Moses. How does the New Testament show that Joshua is also a symbol for Jesus Christ?

The writers of the New Testament show that Jesus does many of the things that Joshua did. Joshua stepped into Canaan after 40 years in the desert. In the same way, Jesus started His work for God after 40 days in the desert (Matthew 4:1–11; Luke 4:1–13). Jesus also started His work in heaven for us 40 days after He woke up from the dead (Acts 1:3, 9–11).

Joshua crossed the Jordan River. Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River (Matthew 3:13–17; Mark 1:9–11). After His baptism, Matthew, Mark, and Luke use a quote from a song about the Suffering Servant from God (Matthew 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22). Because of His baptism, Jesus is the Warrior who will fight the wars of God against evil. Jesus' life and death cause God to throw Satan out of heaven for good. Jesus' life and death help us win the fight over our spiritual enemies (Ephesians 4:8). Jesus offers spiritual rest to His people. He promises us a home in the new earth (Hebrews 9:15).

What does it mean to "rest" in everything Jesus did for us and continues to do for us? Jesus won the fight against Satan for us. Why does this thought give us hope?

JOSHUA AND US (1 Timothy 1:18)

Joshua is a symbol for Jesus. Also, Joshua is a symbol for the success of God's church. The church is the same as Jesus' body. How do the wars that Joshua fought with Israel show us the church's fight against evil? How are these fights different? Read 1 Timothy 1:18; 2 Timothy 4:7; Ephesians 6:10–12; 2 Corinthians 10:3–5; and Acts 20:32.

The New Testament writers understood that Joshua was a symbol for the church. The members of the church are the same as the body of Jesus Christ. The church fights spiritual battles against evil. At the same time, the church enjoys rest because of God's mercy (Hebrews 4:9–11). The church also now enjoys many of the blessings of the things that God promises them in the future.

Read 1 Peter 1:4; Colossians 3:24; Revelation 20:9; and Revelation 21:3.

Joshua's life showed so much of God's love and His law. That's why Joshua's life is a symbol for the Savior and the work He came to do.

For us today, the Savior already came. So, we don't need symbols to promise us the things that He will come to do. At the same time, we can show people who Jesus is. We can show God's glory and honor in our lives. Jesus wanted to share this glory with His followers (John 17:22). We can have this glory when we think about the love of God and His law. The more we think about Jesus, the more we show the beauty of His law and His love. If we want to do these things, we must spend time studying the Bible every day. We also must spend time thinking about Jesus' love and His teachings. For sure, when we look at Jesus, we will become changed.

Joshua asked the Israelites: “ ‘Why do you wait so long to take your land? The **LORD**, the God of your ancestors, has given this land to you’ ” (Joshua 18:3, ICB). How would Jesus ask us this same question today?



The more we think about Jesus, the more we show the beauty of His law and His love. If we want to do these things, we must spend time studying the Bible every day.



“We want workers who care about God’s cause. Who will answer the cry that comes from people everywhere on earth ‘Come over . . . and help us!’” [Acts 16:9, NLV]?”

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: “The church needs people who are the same as Caleb and Joshua. Caleb and Joshua were loyal and filled with faith. The church needs people who are ready to accept everlasting life and are willing to obey God. Our churches badly need these workers. These workers must share Jesus everywhere on earth. The cities and villages also badly need these Bible workers. The people in these cities and villages worship false gods. They are no different from the people in Asia who haven’t heard Bible truth. These people worship nature and many gods. The true love for souls is missing from the hearts of church members. These church members say that they serve God. But their hearts are no longer warm with a love for people. They no longer care about sharing Jesus with them and leading them to Jesus. We want workers who care about God’s cause. Who will answer the cry that comes from people everywhere on earth: ‘Come over . . . and help us!’ [Acts 16:9, NLV]?”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 4, page 156, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① How do the symbols in the Bible help you to understand better the work of Jesus Christ for you?
- ② How are the spiritual battles that we fight the same as Joshua’s war to win Canaan? How are our battles different?
- ③ Joshua was a symbol of the promises that God made to modern Israel. God kept those promises to His church in the life and death of Jesus. Think about how Jesus kept all the promises that God made to us in Joshua. Now think about God’s promise of a life without pain, suffering, and death. How does this future promise give us real hope in the everyday problems that we have in our lives?
- ④ Joshua showed God’s love in his life. Joshua’s life showed us the work that Jesus came to do and is doing for us now in heaven. What are some of the ways that you can let Jesus show His love in you more fully?

TRUSTING IN GOD'S TIMING

For four years, Kim Sun argued with his parents about the Bible every time he came home to South Korea on vacation. Sun was studying religion at the Adventist University of the Philippines. After Sun finished school, he kept talking to his parents about the teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Then Sun started his master's studies in religion. He continued to fight with his parents about Bible teachings. The fights got so bad that members at Sun's parents' church started to pray. They prayed that Sun's parents wouldn't leave their church. Finally, Mother asked Sun to stop talking about the Bible.

Sun felt upset until he heard a sermon. The preacher of the sermon said that God has a special plan for each person's life. The sermon helped Sun understand that his plan for his parents may not be God's plan. Sun decided to pray and trust God's timing. He didn't talk to his parents about the Bible for two years.

In the meantime, Sun finished his master's and got a job with the church. Sun wished with all his heart to work as a pastor. But he didn't get a job offer.

As time passed, Mother started to wonder if her own beliefs were keeping her son from getting a job. Mother heard someone ask Sun if his parents were Seventh-day Adventists. Sun said that his parents belonged to another church. Mother asked Sun, "Would it help you to get a job if we joined your church?"

Sun understood that his parents were worried about his future. But he didn't want them to become Seventh-day Adventists for that reason. He wanted them to join the church because they believed in its message. Sun said, "Mom, that would not help me. You need to study the Bible for yourself and then decide."

Sun introduced his parents to a Seventh-day Adventist pastor in their area. The pastor started to study the Bible with them. Nothing Sun said convinced his parents for the last five years. But now, as they studied the Bible, they saw Jesus' love in the Seventh-day Adventist teachings. After two months, Sun's parents joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Sun was so happy! He was the first Seventh-day Adventist in his family. Now his parents joined him in his faith. Sun remembered the joy he felt many years ago in the Philippines when a man's life changed after Sun introduced him to Jesus. After that experience, Sun wanted to work for God full-time.

Now, Sun decided to go back to the Philippines to work for God.

Kim Sun is a manager for the 1,000 Missionary Movement, in Silang, Philippines. The headquarters were built with help of the 13th Sabbath Offering from 1996. Read more next week.

INSIDE *Story*



But now, as Sun's parents studied the Bible, they saw Jesus' love in the Seventh-day Adventist teachings.



Kim Sun

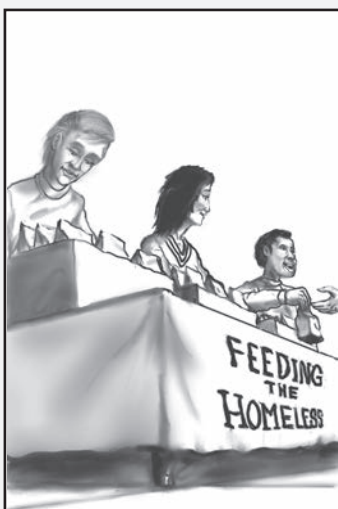
Living in the Land



SABBATH—DECEMBER 6

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Joshua 22:1–8; Joshua 22:9–20; Joshua 22:13–15; Joshua 22:21–29; Joshua 22:30–34.

MEMORY VERSE: “A gentle answer will calm [stop] a person’s anger. But an unkind [mean and sharp] answer will cause more anger” (Proverbs 15:1, ICB).



In a church, people with different pasts and ideas come together to work for the Lord.

WHEN WE LIVE IN A COMMUNITY, sometimes we may argue or disagree with each other. A church is a community where this problem can happen. In a church, people with different pasts and ideas come together to work for the Lord. Because we are all different, we may disagree. Some disagreements can cause misunderstandings between members.

This week, we will study Joshua 22. In this chapter, the people have a misunderstanding. In the beginning of the book of Joshua, Joshua commanded some of the family groups of Israel on the east side of the Jordan River to come help the family groups on the west side (Joshua 1:12–18). The family groups from the east side came over to help the other family groups win their land. So, now these family groups from the east side are free to go back home across the river. But before they do, these family groups build an altar on the east side. This altar makes the Israelites who live on the west side of the Jordan River very upset.

Why must we be careful not to think the worst about the behavior of other people? How can we have peace and agreement in the church? How can our remembering the special work God gave us to do as a church help us to stay peaceful and not get upset when bad things happen?

KEEPING PROMISES (Joshua 22:1–8)

Read Joshua 22:1–8. What do these verses tell us about the loyalty of the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-family group of Manasseh?

Joshua says that the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-family group of Manasseh kept their promises, just as Moses commanded. These family groups left their wives, children, and homes on the east side of the Jordan River. They fought alongside the rest of the Israelites to help them win their land. The time they spent fighting was about six to seven years (compare with Joshua 11:18; Joshua 14:10; Deuteronomy 2:14). They decided to fight because they were loyal to the promise they made. They didn't let their fear about dying or getting hurt in war get in the way of keeping their promise.

Joshua 22:1–8 shows us that peace and agreement are important for God's people. These verses talk about why God's people must be united as one people. Will the Israelite family groups continue to stay united in the future? Will they continue to worship the Lord as their only God? Or will they let the land that they live in separate them?

Joshua explains that real loyalty comes from serving God, and not people.

The New Testament teaches this same idea about serving God. Paul tells Christians to work as if they were working for God and not just people (read Ephesians 6:7; Colossians 3:23; 1 Thessalonians 2:4). What more important job do we have than working for God? He made everything!

In everyday life, we often have problems that can make us feel hopeless. We may want to give up the fight. Sure, that's the easy thing to do. But we always can pray for God to help us. God can give us His power to do what He asks us to do. If we keep trusting in Jesus, He will give us the strength to continue our work for Him.

Joshua 22:5, 6 says that Joshua asked the family groups who were going back home to remember to stay loyal to the Lord. Then Joshua blessed them. What would happen if we prayed more for each other? How would our prayers change our relationships in the church for the better?



If we keep trusting in Jesus, He will give us the strength to continue our work for Him.

BLAME (Joshua 22:9–20)

Read the story about the three family groups of Israel who go back to their homes on the east side of the Jordan River (Joshua 22:9–20). What do the family groups who live on the west side of the Jordan River accuse the east side family groups of doing? Were the east side family groups correct? Explain your answer.

In Joshua 22:1, the family groups of Israel who live on the east side of the Jordan River are called their usual names: Reubenites and Gadites and the half-family group of Manasseh. But in verses 9–20, different names are used for them. They are named the sons of Reuben, the sons of Gad, and the half-family group of Manasseh (Joshua 22:13).

In the story, the people of Israel are the 9 1/2 family groups who live on the west side of the Jordan River. This name doesn't include the three family groups that live on the east side: the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-family group of Manasseh. This separation shows us that a misunderstanding divided the west-side family groups from the east-side family groups. The question from the story is: Can the family groups on the east side of the Jordan River be seen as real Israelites anymore?

What happened that caused this problem? The Israelites on the east side of the Jordan River built an altar at the river. The Bible doesn't say why the Israelites built the altar or what they used it for. Remember what happened in Joshua 3 and 4, when all the Israelites came to the Jordan River to cross over into Canaan. At that time, Joshua commanded the Israelites to carry 12 stones from the river. Then Joshua set up the stones to help the Israelites remember the Lord.

But this new altar worries the Israelites on the west side of the Jordan River. They don't think that the altar is for remembering God. So, they ask what the stones mean. They want to know why the altar was built. (Compare with Joshua 4:6, 22.) Is the altar for burnt offerings to false gods? Or is the altar just to help Israel remember the Lord? Are the family groups from the east side already starting to sin against God?

The family groups who lived on the east side of the Jordan River didn't ask for permission to build the altar. They didn't talk with Joshua or Eleazar or other leaders first. Now they have a misunderstanding that could lead to an awful fight between all the family groups of Israel.



This new altar worries the Israelites on the west side of the Jordan River. They don't think that the altar is for remembering God. So, they ask what the stones mean. They want to know why the altar was built.

THE SINS FROM THE PAST (Joshua 22:13–15)

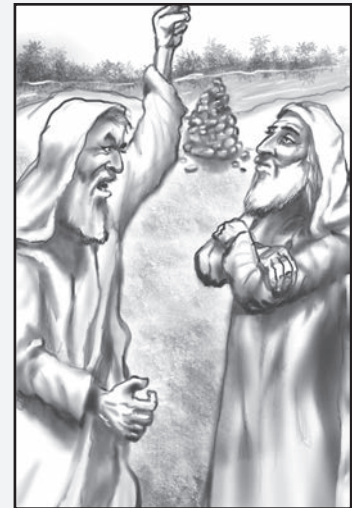
Why do the Israelites on the west side of the River Jordan choose Phinehas as their leader? Read Joshua 22:13–15 again, along with Numbers 25.

The Israelites who live on the west side of the Jordan River want answers. They want to know why the family groups who live on the east side of the Jordan River built an altar at the east side of the river. The Israelites from the west side of the Jordan River are named the sons of Israel two times. They send a group of leaders to talk to the family groups from the east side of the Jordan River. The leader of the group is Phinehas. Phinehas is the son of Eleazar, who is the high priest. The high priest is the top religious leader for Israel. Phinehas will become high priest after Eleazar dies (Joshua 24:33).

Phinehas is already famous in Israel. He put a stop to the evil that Israel did at Baal Peor (Numbers 25): “Phinehas was the son of Eleazar and the grandson of Aaron the priest. Phinehas saw this man bring the woman into camp. So he left the meeting and got his spear. He followed the Israelite into the tent. Then he used the spear to kill the Israelite man and the Midianite woman in her tent. He pushed the spear through both of their bodies. At that time there was a great [terrible] sickness among the Israelites. But when Phinehas killed these two people, the sickness stopped” (Numbers 25:7, 8, ERV).

The rest of the men in the group were leaders of the 9 1/2 family groups of Israel. These 9 1/2 family groups lived on the west side of the Jordan River.

The leaders from the west side meet with the family groups from the east side. The west-side leaders start with these words: “ ‘All the people of the Lord say, “What sin is this that you have done against the God of Israel?” ’ ” (Joshua 22:16, NLV). The word “sin” in this verse is the same Hebrew word that the Bible uses to talk about Achan’s sin (Joshua 7:1). We see this same word many times in the writings of Moses (read Leviticus 5:15; Leviticus 6:2; Numbers 5:6, 12). The stories about Achan and Baal Peor are warnings about what happens when Israel steals from God and fights against Him. The west-side Israelites are afraid that the east-side family groups built the altar to worship false gods. If so, God will punish everyone in all the 12 family groups of Israel.



The leaders from the west side meet with the family groups from the east side.

A GENTLE ANSWER (Joshua 22:21–29)

What can we learn from the answer of the family groups that lived on the east side of the Jordan River? Read Joshua 22:21–29, along with Proverbs 15:1, for the answer.



The east-side family groups built the altar to help them feel included in Israel. . . . When the Israelites from the west side of the Jordan hear this answer, they are filled with joy.

The answer of the family groups from the east side of the Jordan River is very powerful. The family groups from the east side stay quiet and listen to the words said against them. The family groups from the east side are very patient. They wait until the west-side leaders finish talking before they answer. The peaceful spirit of the east-side family groups is surprising. Their gentle spirit shows us the meaning of this verse: “A gentle answer will calm [stop] a person’s anger. But an unkind [mean and sharp] answer will cause more anger” (Proverbs 15:1, ICB).

Then the family groups from the east side answer. They start with many names for Israel’s God in their answer: El, Elohim, Yahweh (Joshua 22:22). These names show the loyalty and faith of the east-side family groups in the God of Israel. Their faith and their gentle words help to stop a civil war in Israel. Why did the east-side family groups build the altar? They were afraid of being separated from the other Israelites on the west side of the Jordan River. So, the east-side family groups built the altar to help them feel included in Israel. They also wanted to show their loyalty to God. What makes the people of Israel united? Is it the land? No, their loyalty to God and obedience to His commandments make them one people.

When the Israelites from the west side of the Jordan hear this answer, they are filled with joy. They are happy that their fears were wrong. They have no reason to feel upset or afraid. The meeting solves the problems and stops civil war from happening. All the family groups continue to be one people in the Lord.

How do you feel when someone accuses you of something you didn’t do? What do you say or do when someone believes the worst about you? To give you hope, please read Psalm 37:3–6, 34, 37.

SOLVING PROBLEMS (Joshua 22:30–34)

Read the story in Joshua 22:30–34. What does this story teach us about how to solve problems? Also, what does this story teach us about keeping peace in the church? (Compare with Psalm 133; John 17:20–23; 1 Peter 3:8, 9.)

Joshua 22 contains important rules for communication. We can use these rules to help us in our everyday relationships in the family, church, and community.

Rule #1. When things go wrong or look wrong, the best thing to do is communicate. Don't hold back your feelings until you are ready to "blow up" with anger at someone. As God's people, we should try to solve our problems. We should not pretend that there is no problem or avoid talking about it. Of course, the family groups from the east side of the Jordan River should have communicated with the other Israelites about their plan to build an altar. Then they could have avoided the misunderstanding.

Rule #2. Don't be too quick to judge. The West Jordan Israelites were quick to believe the false stories. They believed the worst about the East Jordan family groups.

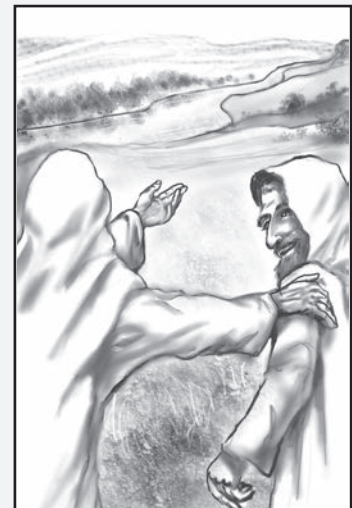
Rule #3. Talk about the problems before you act.

Rule #4. Be willing to give up something for peace and agreement. The west-side Israelites were willing to give up part of their land to help the family groups from the east side of the River Jordan.

Rule #5. When someone blames you for a problem, give a gentle or soft answer. A gentle or kind answer keeps that person from getting angry. If you accuse the person who is blaming you, what happens? You both will never have peace. Try to understand the other person before you talk.

Rule #6. Rejoice and bless God when He causes peace between you and the other person. The west-side Israelites were filled with joy when they learned the real reason that the east-side family groups built the altar. The west-side Israelites weren't filled with pride. They confessed that they were wrong to judge their brothers.

What if the east-side family groups really sinned? Then the Israelites would have punished them as the law of Moses commanded. We can't have peace and agreement if we don't follow God's rules. But punishment should always be our last plan, not our first. First, we should try to be at peace and solve our problems. For sure, our churches would be different if we always remember to follow these rules.



The west-side Israelites were willing to give up part of their land to help the family groups from the east side of the River Jordan.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Division of Canaan,” pages 517–520, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

“While we must punish sin, we must not be mean or nasty. We must not judge people because we hear terrible stories about them. . . .

“The Reubenites and their companions showed that they were wise. Their example is worthy of our attention. We should copy their behavior. The Reubenites and their companions wanted to serve God and His religion. The other Israelites believed the worst about them and scolded them with sharp words. But the Reubenites and their companions didn’t get upset. They were kind and patient. They listened to the things their brothers said first. Then the Reubenites and their companions answered. They fully explained their reasons for their actions. Their explanation showed that they were innocent.

“When someone accuses you of something you didn’t do, you can be patient and kind. God knows everything. He knows everything we misunderstand. We can safely leave our problem in His hands. God will show that we are innocent. But we must put our trust in Him. God searched Achan’s heart and judged his guilt. If we are filled with Jesus’ spirit, His love will fill our hearts. His love will make us kind and patient.

“God wants His people to love each other and to agree. Before Jesus died on the cross, He prayed for His followers [John 17:20]. Jesus prayed this prayer for us, too. Jesus wanted His followers to be one with each other as He is one with the Father. When we agree, then other people on earth will know that God sent Jesus.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pages 519, 520, adapted.



“Before Jesus died on the cross, He prayed for His followers.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Paul commands us to “honor others more than yourselves” (Philippians 2:3, ERV). How can following this advice help us to think the best about our brothers and sisters?
- ② Why do we often get angry about things? How do our past mistakes cause us to get upset about the things that happen now? How can we stop getting upset? Why is it important to hear what other people have to say? How can we learn to listen more in our church? (Compare with James 1:19.)

GOD'S HELPING HANDS

Kim Sun was excited to be sent to a part of the Philippines that was far away from any city. Sun was going to serve as a Bible worker for 10 months.

But Sun wondered what the best way was to serve Jesus during this time. Sun remembered how he argued with his parents about the Bible for five years. He didn't convince them to accept any Bible truth he taught. Now Sun had only 10 months.

As Sun prayed, he thought, "If I try to start with Bible teachings, people may reject the Bible, the same as my parents. Maybe I first need to show everyone Jesus' love."

Sun decided not to tell anyone that he was a Bible worker. He wouldn't try to talk about Bible teachings at first. He would just make friends for three months and help people.

When Sun arrived in the village, he visited each of the 20 to 30 homes there. Sun offered to help his new neighbors.

Sun asked the woman at the first house if she needed help with anything. "Please let me know how I may help you."

The woman was happy to accept Sun's nice offer.

Sun helped 17 people in the neighborhood that first day. The first woman he visited made him lunch and supper as Sun worked.

As Sun walked home, he felt tired. But he thought, "I'm God's helping hands!"

Soon, Sun had a long list of names of people to visit who wanted his help. From Monday to Friday, Sun visited two homes in the morning and two homes in the afternoon.

Sun also was a friend in other ways to the villagers. Sun grew corn and gave it away. When people asked how much money they owed for the corn, Sun said, "Nothing! The corn came from God. God paid the price for you." Sometime later, Sun saw a boy with a deep cut in his leg. Sun put medicine on the cut. The cut healed a few days later. The parents came to Sun and asked, "How can we thank you?"

Sun served the villagers for three months. He didn't tell them he was a Bible worker at that time. Sun wasn't keeping this information secret. Nobody asked him about it. Sun prayed about what to do for his next three months.

Kim Sun is a manager for the 1,000 Missionary Movement, in Silang, Philippines. The headquarters were built with help of the 13th Sabbath Offering from 1996. Read more next week.

INSIDE *Story*



**"God paid the price
for you."**



Kim Sun

God Keeps His Promises!



SABBATH—DECEMBER 13

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Joshua 21:43–45; Joshua 23:1–5; Joshua 23:6–8, 12, 13; Joshua 23:15, 16; Joshua 23:11.

MEMORY VERSE: “The LORD kept every promise that he made to the Israelites. There were no promises that he failed to keep. Every promise came true” (Joshua 21:45, ERV).

WHEN JOHN F. KENNEDY became the president of the USA, on January 20, 1961, he spoke to the country. Kennedy's talk was only 1,366 words long. But his words became famous. Kennedy encouraged Americans to serve their country first and not ask the country to serve them. Kennedy said, “Our reward shall be knowing that we do right. History will be our judge. History will show that we chose to do the right thing. So, let us be leaders in this land that we love. Let us ask God for His blessing and His help. While we are here on this earth, God's work must become our work.”

When Joshua was old, he knew he was going to die soon. So, he decided to talk to the leaders of Israel and the people (Joshua 23 and 24). Joshua 23 talks more about the future and **how** to worship God. Joshua 24 talks about God's promises to His people in the past. This chapter also talks about the only Person **who** is worthy of our worship. **How** should we worship God? With all our hearts. **Who** is worthy of our worship? The Lord.

This week, we study the first talk of Joshua. In this talk, he looks back at the wars God won for Israel. At the same time, Joshua looks at how Israel can enjoy success in the future.



When John F. Kennedy became the president of the USA, on January 20, 1961, he spoke to the country. Kennedy encouraged Americans to serve their country first and not ask the country to serve them.

GOD KEPT HIS PROMISES (Joshua 21:43–45)

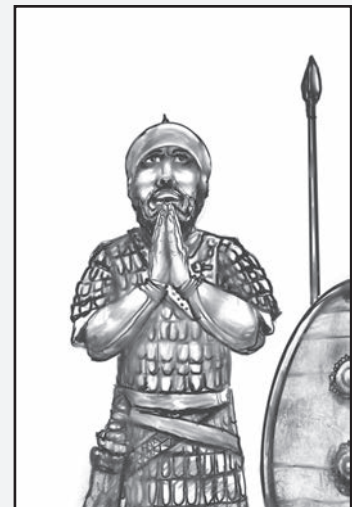
What does Joshua 21:43–45 tell us about God and the Promised Land? What do these words teach us about God’s plan to save us (2 Timothy 2:11–13)?

Joshua 21:43–45 talks about one of the most important topics in the whole book: the Lord keeps His promises. These verses also tell us, in short, everything that has happened in the book of Joshua so far. Joshua 21:43 talks about how the land was divided and settled. (We can read all about those things in Joshua 13–21.) Joshua 21:44 talks about the wars Israel fought. This verse also says that Israel got control over the land. (We can read more about that topic in Joshua 1–12.) All this past history shows Israel that God keeps His promises to them. The Israelites must remember not to say they won the wars or the land on their own. They won because God kept His promises. God promised to fight for them and give them the land.

God “gave the people all the land that he had promised” (Joshua 21:43, ERV). “The LORD allowed the Israelites to defeat every enemy” (Joshua 21:44, ERV). The Lord “promised their people of long ago that he would do that” (Joshua 21:44, NIV). “The LORD kept every promise that he made to the Israelites” (Joshua 21:45, ERV). These verses show that the land is the Lord’s gift to His people. Israel can’t brag that they got the land on their own. The Lord promised to give them the land. He won their wars.

All of Israel’s success came from God. The same thing is true about our being saved. “God’s grace [mercy] has saved you because of your faith in Christ. Your salvation [God’s saving mercy] doesn’t come from anything you do. It [mercy] is God’s gift. It [God’s mercy] is not based on anything you have done. No one can brag about earning it” (Ephesians 2:8, 9, NIV). Paul also wrote, “If we died with him, then we will also live with him. If we accept suffering, then we will also rule [be a leader] with him. If we say we don’t know him, then he will say he doesn’t know us. If we are not faithful [don’t keep our promises], he will still be faithful [keep His promises], because he must be true to who he is” (2 Timothy 2:11–13, ICB).

God kept all His promises in the past. How does this Bible truth help us trust that He will keep all His promises for the future?



The Israelites must remember not to say they won the wars or the land on their own. They won because God kept His promises.

SUCCESS DEPENDS ON OUR TRUST IN GOD (Joshua 23:1–5)



**Jesus goes to God for help
for us today.**

God's promises to Israel depend on if the people obey. They won't enjoy success if they don't obey God. That's because success is always connected with their obedience to Bible truth. The land is proof of God's love for His people. The land shows that God keeps His promises (Nehemiah 9:8). As long as the Israelites continue to obey God, God will give them the rest of the land. Will the people hold on to what God already gave them?

Read Joshua's sermon in Joshua 23:1–5. What are the important parts of Joshua's introduction to his sermon?

The Israelites will need to finish the work God gave them to win the rest of the land. Joshua explains how Israel will do that. They can win only if the Lord helps them. But first Israel must learn from its past. The Israelites doubted the Lord and His promises after He helped them escape from Egypt. So, the Lord taught Israel a lesson. Israel needed to learn to trust God. That's why God allowed Israel to fight with Him. The Israelites also must remember that they didn't win because of their strength. They won because God fought for them. He gave them their land, too.

God also gave Israel peace and rest. But now the Israelites must fight some of the people who live in the rest of the land God promised them. God's people can win these fights. But they must remember that they will win only with God's help.

Compare how the Israelites won the Promised Land with how Christians can win the fight against sin. How are these two fights the same? Read Joshua 23:10; Colossians 2:15; 2 Corinthians 10:3–5; and Ephesians 6:11–18 for the answer.

The Israelites didn't win their fights because of their own strength and skill. They won because the Lord fought for them. In the same way, we win the fight against sin because of the things Jesus did for us and is doing now. Jesus died for us on the cross. He goes to the Father for help for us today. We must depend completely on God for success. The Holy Spirit will help us win the fight over sin.

God gives us so many wonderful promises to win the fight against sin. So, why do we keep on sinning?

STRONG BORDERS (Joshua 23:6–8, 12, 13)

Joshua tells Israel that the work that they must do includes more than fighting wars. Their work is spiritual. Their work includes obeying God and keeping His laws.

Why do you think Joshua was so strict with the Israelites about their relationships with people from foreign countries? Read Joshua 23:6–8, 12, 13 for the answer.

The people from the countries around Israel are a danger to Israel. Why? God fought for Israel. So, Israel didn't need to be afraid of the weapons of its enemies. The real risk was friendship with the enemy. The Israelites needed to be on guard against the false ideas and beliefs of the people around them. These could be a worse danger than any army. Joshua helps the leaders of Israel to remember that their war is a spiritual one, not just a military battle. So, the Israelites must be careful not to worship the false gods of their enemies. If the Israelites do, they will no longer be God's special people. They will become the same as the people around them.

Joshua commands the Israelites not to say the name of any false god. The Israelites must not make promises in the name of these gods. The Israelites must not bow down to them or serve them either. In Bible times, a god's name held his power and life. If you said the name of one of these foreign gods, then you gave that god power over you. So, the Israelites must not say these gods' names in their everyday greetings or in their business deals. The Israelites must not seek help from these gods in their time of need (compare with Judges 2:1–3, 11–13).

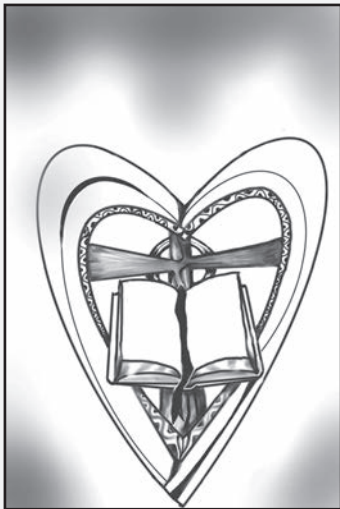
Also, the people of Israel must not marry any of the Canaanites who lived in the land. Why? Because marriages with Canaanites would cause Israel to stop worshiping God. Just look at what happened with Solomon later on. His story is a sad example of what happens when we marry people who don't worship the Lord (1 Kings 3:1; 1 Kings 11:1–8). In the New Testament, Christians are warned not to marry people who don't believe in Jesus (2 Corinthians 6:14). Paul does say that a Christian who is married to a non-Christian should not divorce. Paul commands them to stay married and to live a powerful Christian life. Then maybe they will win their husband or wife to the Lord (1 Corinthians 7:12–16).



The Israelites must not bow down to false gods or serve them either.

THE LORD'S ANGER (Joshua 23:15, 16)

What does Joshua say about the Lord's anger and His punishment of sin (Joshua 23:15, 16)? What does the Bible say elsewhere about this topic? Read Numbers 11:33; 2 Chronicles 36:16; Revelation 14:10, 19; Revelation 15:1.) How should we understand these Bible truths?



The Bible tells us that God is loving. He also is love.

God was very angry with the Israelites at times when they were in the desert (Numbers 11:33; Numbers 12:9) and in the Promised Land (Joshua 7:1). So, the Israelites knew what would happen if they broke God's law. Joshua 23:15, 16 may surprise us because Joshua uses very sharp words. The Lord will destroy Israel, the same as the Canaanites, if the people break their agreement with Him. Then the Lord will punish Israel with all the curses in their agreement (Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 28). These verses show that the Lord is the Judge of the whole earth. The Lord announces His war against sin, even when He finds it in Israel. Israel wasn't made holy because of the people's good behavior. Their fighting in God's holy wars didn't make them holy either.

Israel must choose if it wants to have a future filled with glory. Or it can choose a life of sin and face God's anger.

The Bible's teachings on God's anger may confuse us at first. The Bible tells us that God is loving. He also is love (John 3:16; 1 John 4:8). So, we may think the idea is strange that God's anger can help us understand His love. The Bible shows us a powerful picture of this love. God is caring and patient. He is ready to forgive (Exodus 34:6; Micah 7:18). At the same time, God's anger is part of His holy love against sin and evil. God's anger isn't a feeling. His anger is never mean and nasty. God's anger is not revenge. When God punishes sin, He isn't getting even with us for breaking His law. The New Testament teaches that Jesus became sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21). When Jesus died, He made a way for God to accept us (Romans 5:10). Whoever believes in God will not be punished with His anger (John 3:36; Ephesians 2:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:10). God's anger helps us understand that God is a holy Judge. So, we can trust God always to be fair when He punishes sin and evil (Psalm 7:11; Psalm 50:6; 2 Timothy 4:8).

HOLD ON TO GOD (Joshua 23:11)

The Israelites must not worship false gods. How can they guard against this sin? They must “hold” on tight to God (Deuteronomy 4:4). This same Hebrew word is used to talk about marriage (Genesis 2:24) and Ruth’s loyalty to Naomi (Ruth 1:14). Joshua says that Israel has held on tight to God to this day. Sad to say, no one can say that about Israel later on, as we see in the book of Judges (Judges 2:2, 7, 11; Judges 3:7, 12; Judges 4:1).

Joshua tells Israel to love the Lord their God (Joshua 23:11; compare with Deuteronomy 6:5). Love can’t be forced. If love is forced, it will not be love. So, what does Joshua mean when he commands Israel to love the Lord?

If the Israelites want to continue to enjoy the blessings of God’s promise, they must stay loyal to God. So, the Israelites must be very careful. They must always remember to “love” the Lord. The Hebrew word “’ahabah” can be used to talk about many different types of love: friendship, sex, a mother’s love, romance, and loyalty to God. Love for God is a decision we make to give our lives fully to Him and serve Him. When we understand this Bible truth, we can understand better Joshua’s command to Israel to love God. (Compare with John 13:34.) God wants our obedience to His commands to come from our personal love relationship with Him (Exodus 19:4; Deuteronomy 6:5; compare with Matthew 22:37). We love God because of everything He does for us. He did these things because of His love and mercy.

The command to love God also helps us to understand God’s love. God wants to enter into a personal relationship with every person who accepts His love. So, God’s love for everyone helps us to love Him, too.

Jesus gave a new commandment to His followers. How is this commandment both old and new at the same time? Read John 13:34; John 15:17; and 1 John 3:11 for the answer. (Compare with Leviticus 19:18.)



The Hebrew word “’ahabah” can be used to talk about many different types of love: friendship, sex, a mother’s love, romance, and loyalty to God.



**“As long as sin continues,
suffering and death
will happen.”**

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Last Words of Joshua,” pages 521, 522, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

“God is the Life-Giver. From the beginning, God’s laws gave life. But sin broke God’s law and His peace. Sin caused evil to fill the earth. As long as sin continues, suffering and death will happen. But the Savior became sin for us. He accepted its penalty for us. So, now we have hope. Because of Jesus, we can escape the terrible penalty of sin.”—Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 522, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Look at all the proof in your life that God loves you. Share some examples with the class. At the same time, what should you do when things don’t happen the way you hope or pray for? What do you do when you ask God to keep His promises, and He is silent?
- ② Talk about what the Bible teaches about God’s anger. Why is God’s anger a part of the Good News?
- ③ What important rules can you take from this week’s lesson about friendship with people who don’t believe in God? How can we be friends and, at the same time, honor God? What important rules can help us to do that and keep us safe while we serve our friends who don’t know Jesus?
- ④ What are some of the things that keep you from holding on tight to the Lord with all your heart? How can you let go of them?

“TELL US ABOUT THE BIBLE”

The woman didn't want help when Kim Sun arrived at her house.

Sun asked, “Why? Have I done something to upset you?”

The woman said, “No, no. I want you to take a break. You need to rest. You have more people to help around the neighborhood this afternoon. Here, eat some cookies and relax.”

The woman's kindness touched Sun's heart. Sun helped people free of charge since he arrived in the village three months ago. Sun didn't tell the villagers he was a Bible worker. He wanted to be their friend and show them God's love first. For three months the villagers accepted Sun's help without thinking about his needs. But now, this woman showed that she cared about him. Sun knew that he made his first real friend in the village.

But the woman wasn't his last friend. Around the same time, many villagers began to think of Sun as their friend. They started to ask him many questions.

One villager asked, “Why are you helping us for free?”

Another said, “Where are you from?”

Sun said he was a Bible worker with the 1,000 Missionary Movement. Sun added, “I want you to know Jesus, so I chose to serve you to show you His love for you.”

The villagers were amazed to learn that Sun was a Bible worker. They said, “If you're a Bible worker, why don't you tell us all about the Bible?”

Sun asked, “Do you really want to study the Bible?”

“Yes!” the villagers said. “Teach us about the Bible.”

Before long, no one wanted Sun's help as a handyman anymore. Everyone was studying the Bible with Sun. A few people didn't ask for Bible studies at first. But they agreed when Sun invited them. After three months of Sun's helping them free of charge, how could the villagers say no?

Sun remembered the mistake he made with his parents. As a new Seventh-day Adventist, Sun tried to convince his parents to accept his beliefs. He failed for five years. Now he taught the villagers that each Bible truth showed God's love.

Sun shared the Bible story about how God made everything. Sun said, “This story shows God's love for you.” Next, Sun read the picture stories about the Good Samaritan and the Lost Son. Sun said, “These picture stories show God's love for you, also.” Then Sun told the villagers that Jesus died on the cross for them. Sun said, “The cross shows God's love for you, too.”

Kim Sun is a manager for the 1,000 Missionary Movement, in Silang, Philippines. The headquarters were built with help of the 13th Sabbath Offering from 1996. Read more about Sun next week.

INSIDE Story



**“Eat some cookies
and relax.**



Kim Sun

Make Your Choice Today!



SABBATH—DECEMBER 20

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Joshua 24:2–13; Joshua 24:14, 15; Joshua 24:16–18; Joshua 24:22–24; Joshua 24:29–33.

MEMORY VERSE: “ ‘But maybe you don’t want to serve the Lord. You must choose for yourselves today. . . . As for me and my family, we will serve the Lord’ ” (Joshua 24:15, ICB).



The agreement helps Israel remember that their king is the Lord.

IN THE LAST CHAPTER OF JOSHUA, the people agree again to serve God. Joshua, their leader, helps Israel to make this promise. In this final chapter, we see that Israel’s agreement has the same parts as other agreements from that time. These agreements or promises have seven parts. (1) The agreement has a beginning. The beginning of the agreement names the person who is making the promise. (2) Also, the beginning contains history. The history talks about the relationship between the groups who are making the agreement. (3) The agreement talks about how one group or person must be loyal to the other person in the agreement. (4) The agreement contains a list of blessings for keeping the promise and curses for breaking it. (5) The agreement names the witnesses. (6) A record of the promise is made for the future. And (7) the promise is made legal.

Joshua is at the end of his life. But Joshua doesn’t name anyone to replace him as leader. The Israelites don’t need a human king. God is their leader. If the Israelites stay loyal to God, He will lead and protect them. The agreement helps the people remember that their king is the Lord.

YOU WERE THERE! (Joshua 24:2–13)

“Then all the tribes [the 12 family groups] of Israel met together at Shechem. Joshua called [invited] them all together there. Then he called [sent for] the elders [religious leaders], heads [leaders] of families, judges and officers of Israel. These men stood before [in front of] God” (Joshua 24:1, ICB).

Abraham built an altar at Shechem. Shechem was the place where God first gave Abraham the promise about the land (Genesis 12:6, 7). Now, God keeps His promise to Abraham at last. God gives the land to Israel. So, Israel makes new the agreement with God. The people promise to serve the Lord at the very place where God first promised Israel the land. Joshua’s words at this time help us to remember the words of Jacob about false gods. Joshua says, “ ‘Throw away the statues of the gods that are among [with] you’ ” (Joshua 24:23, NIV; compare with Genesis 35:2–4). Shechem helps the Israelites to remember that they must be loyal to God. They must reject all other “gods.”

What is God’s message to Israel? Read Joshua 24:2–13 for the answer.

Look at what God says He did for Israel. God “took,” “gave,” “sent,” “punished,” “helped Israel escape,” “made Israel free,” and so on. God did all those things, not Israel. God made Israel. If God hadn’t chosen Abraham to serve Him, the Israelites would be worshiping false gods. Israel is a country because of God’s mercy. So, the Israelites must not brag that they settled the land on their own. Their living in the land is proof that they should serve God.

The Lord’s message talks about “you” (Israel) and “they” (Israel’s fathers). The Lord talks about Israel now and their fathers in the past as if they were all one group. Joshua wants to show a Bible truth that Moses already taught Israel in Deuteronomy 5:3. The Lord didn’t make His promise only with the Israelites in the past. The Lord’s promise is also for the Israelites who hear Joshua’s message. Most of these Israelites weren’t alive when God helped His people escape Egypt. But Joshua says that all of them were there. Why? Because he wants the new Israelites to understand that the things God did for Israel in the past, He also did for them. He will work for them now, too.



If God hadn’t chosen Abraham to serve Him, the Israelites would be worshiping false gods.

WITH HONESTY AND TRUTH (Joshua 24:14, 15)

What did Joshua ask the Israelites to do? Read Joshua 24:14, 15 for the answer. What does it mean to serve the Lord with honesty and truth?

Joshua asks the Israelites to choose if they want to continue to be God's special people. The choice is up to them. They must decide to stay loyal to God and live in the land. Or they can go back to worshiping false gods. Then they will become the same as the people around them. The people around them have no special relationship with God or special work to do for Him.

If the Israelites choose the Lord, they must respect and serve Him with honest hearts. They must follow Bible truth. To respect the Lord means that we understand that our God is holy and everlasting. God is all-powerful and wonderful. We, on the other hand, are small. Our lives have a beginning and an end. We are sinners. To fear God is to accept His work for us. We also will accept Him as our Father in heaven and our King. When we believe these things, we will live obedient lives (Leviticus 19:14; Leviticus 25:17; Deuteronomy 17:19; 2 Kings 17:34). When we respect God, we also will serve Him.

How do we serve God? In two ways. (1) We serve Him with an "honest life." (2) We also "live Bible truth." An "honest life" comes from a Hebrew word that mostly is used to talk about animal offerings. The Hebrews must bring only perfect animal offerings to the Lord. When we "live Bible truth," we will show we are loyal to God. God's love shows us who He is. God is loyal. He keeps all His promises.

A loyal person is dependable. We can trust him. Joshua asks the Israelites to show the same loyalty to God that God shows to them. Our hearts must match our behavior. Our lives should show everyone that we are grateful to God for everything He does for us.

What does it mean to you to serve the Lord with honesty and Bible truth? What are some of the things that keep you from doing that?



The Hebrews must bring only perfect animal offerings to the Lord.

FREE TO SERVE (Joshua 24:16–18)

Joshua respects the free will of his people. He wants the Israelites to serve God because of their free choice. Joshua doesn't want Israel to feel forced to serve God. That's why Joshua reminds the Israelites that they freely chose to serve the Lord (read Joshua 24:22). In other verses, Moses also talks about how God chose Israel to be His special people (Deuteronomy 7:6, 7; Deuteronomy 10:15; Deuteronomy 14:2). Israel is free to say "no" to the Lord after He chooses them. But that would be silly and foolish. Israel can choose to say "yes" to God. Then the people can continue to live and enjoy success. Or they can reject God and die.

What was the Israelites' answer to Joshua's invitation (Joshua 24:16–18)? What did Joshua say when he heard their answer? Why do you think he said these things? Read Joshua 24:19–21 for the answer.

In their answer, the Israelites show that they understand that the God of their fathers is now their God (Joshua 24:17, 18). The Israelites are willing to serve God with their whole hearts. After this promise, you'd think that Joshua would say something encouraging and nice. But that's not what happens. Joshua changes his topic. He stops talking about God's love in the past. Now Joshua gives the Israelites a warning: God is not always easy to serve.

Joshua knows how the Israelites in the desert easily promised to obey God after He helped them to escape from Egypt (Exodus 19:8; Exodus 24:3; Deuteronomy 5:27). But those same Israelites forgot their promises even as they made them (Exodus 32)! So, Joshua wants to make sure the Israelites under his command understand some things. First, the decision to serve God is very important. Their decision will change their lives. They must live for God and follow His rules. If they do, God will bless them. But if they disobey, they will suffer. Joshua wants them to understand fully what they are promising.

Second, the Israelites must make their own decision to serve God. Joshua can't make that decision for them.

Third, Israel must know that humans can't serve God in their own strength. We need God. We can't serve God with our own good behavior. We must have a personal relationship with God first. He must save us. Then we may serve Him (compare with Exodus 20:1, 2; Deuteronomy 5:6, 7).



Joshua wants to make sure the Israelites under his command understand some things.

THE DANGERS OF WORSHIPING FALSE GODS
(Joshua 24:22–24)

Why would Joshua need to ask the Israelites to get rid of the statues of false gods? Read Joshua 24:22–24 for the answer.

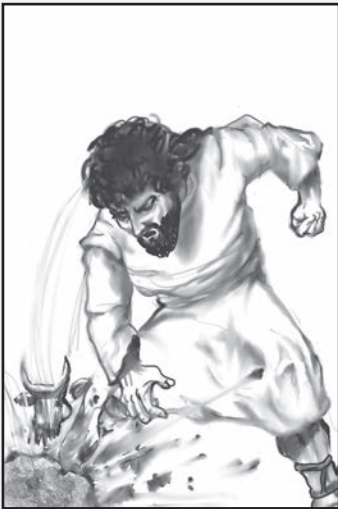
Earlier on the plains of Moab, Moses asked the Israelites to follow the Lord completely (Deuteronomy 30:19, 20). The gods that Joshua talked about are not the gods of Egypt or the gods that belong to the people in the land of Canaan. No, these are the statues of false gods that belong to the Israelites. So, now Joshua also asks his people to give their hearts completely to the Lord. If the people give their hearts fully to the Lord, the Lord will hear their prayers (2 Kings 19:16; Psalm 31:2, 3; Daniel 9:18). Later, God's special messengers will ask the Israelites to give their hearts fully to the Lord and to obey Him (Isaiah 55:3; Jeremiah 7:24). Sad to say, Solomon and other kings served foreign gods (1 Kings 11:2, 4, 9). Without God's help, we are as bad as Solomon. Our hearts are filled with sin. We can't obey God on our own. We must decide to obey Him. Then we must ask Him for help to serve Him fully.

The Israelites answer that they will listen to God's voice. Their answer shows that they are promising to obey God. God isn't asking Israel to follow lifeless or dead rules. God's promise with Israel is about having a living relationship with Him. The Israelites' religion wasn't about being saved with their own good behavior. Their religion was about having a living relationship with a loving God.

Israel's promise to serve God includes the promise to throw away the statues of false gods. But we don't know if the Israelites kept their promise. Whenever Joshua commanded Israel to do something, the book of Joshua reported on how the Israelites kept their promises. But there is no report at the end of the book of Joshua about their throwing out the false gods.

Joshua's invitation to Israel to serve God also is for us today. We must choose to serve the Lord. We also must throw out all of our false gods or idols.

How often do you promise the Lord you will do something? Do you do what you promise? If no, why not? What does your answer tell you about God's patient mercy?



Israel's promise to serve God includes their promise to throw away the statues of false gods.

FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT (Joshua 24:29–33)

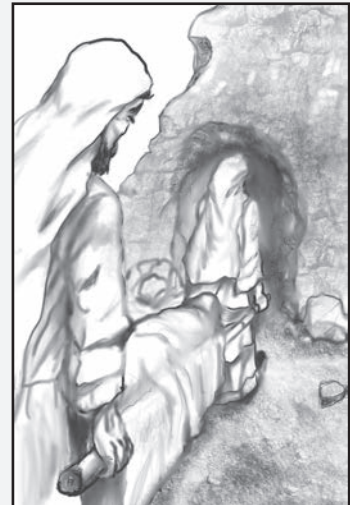
Read the last words in the book of Joshua (Joshua 24:29–33). How do these words look back over Joshua’s life? What do these verses say about the future?

The end of the book of Joshua tells us that Joshua and Eleazar die. Eleazar is the high priest or top religious leader. The writer talks about Joshua and Eleazar being buried. Then the writer talks about Joseph’s bones. Joseph’s bones are a symbol for life outside the Promised Land. The graves of Joshua and Eleazar are symbols of the new life in the land. The writer compares the graves with the bones to show us that the Israelites don’t need to wander anymore. They don’t need to carry Joshua or Eleazar’s bones along with them as they carried Joseph’s. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob buried their family members in a cave (Genesis 23:13, 19; Genesis 25:9, 10). Abraham bought this land at Shechem (Genesis 33:19). Now the Israelites can bury their leaders in the land that God gave them. This land is their home. The graves help Israel to remember that God kept His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

The last verses of the book of Joshua connect the story of the book to Israel’s past history. This connection helps the Israelites also to look to the Lord to lead them in the future.

With Joshua’s death, an amazing chapter in the history of Israel comes to an end. Israel’s future depends on how the people will answer the following question: Will they be loyal to the Lord? Will they hold tight to the Lord? Will they throw away their false gods? The Israelites in Joshua’s day were loyal to the Lord and His law. But will the Israelites after them continue to be obedient? The Israelites in every age in the future will need to answer these questions. Their success as a people depends on the answers they give in their everyday lives. Will their lives show that they love the Bible truths that God gave them?

Both Joshua and Paul “fought the good fight” (2 Timothy 4:7, ERV). Why was Joshua a success? What decisions do you need to make today to finish life with the same success?



Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob buried their family members in a cave.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Last Words of Joshua,” pages 522–524, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

“Joshua wrote down Israel’s promise in the book of the law. Then Joshua put a big stone under an oak tree near the Lord’s holy tent. ‘Then Joshua said to all the people, “This stone will help you remember what we said today. This stone was here when the LORD was speaking to us today. So this stone will be something that helps you remember what happened today. The stone will be a witness against you. It will stop you from turning against your God.” ’ [Joshua 24:27, ERV]. Joshua announces that his warning to the people is not his own words. The warning is from God. This big stone will be a memorial. This memorial will help the Israelites in the future to remember this time. The stone also would be a witness against the people if they start to worship false gods.”—Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, May 26, 1881, adapted.



“Then Joshua put a big stone under an oak tree near the Lord’s holy tent.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Joshua said that the Lord “ ‘is a holy God. And he is a jealous God’ ” (Joshua 24:19, ICB). What does the Bible mean when it says that God is jealous? Jealous of what?
- ② How does understanding “free will” help us love God? Can anyone force you to love someone? If yes, can that love be real? If no, why not?
- ③ How can today’s church leaders help the young people get ready to serve and lead the church in the future?
- ④ Think about the idea that the Israelites served the Lord for all of Joshua’s life. At the end of your life, what would you like people to say about you?

“HOW DO WE LOVE GOD?”

Kim Sun was a Bible worker from South Korea. For three months, Sun shared 15 stories about God's love with the people in a faraway village in the Philippines.

The villagers were surprised to learn that God made everything on earth for them. The villagers were amazed at Jesus' picture stories about the Good Samaritan and the Lost Son. The hearts of the villagers were touched when they understood that Jesus died on the cross for them. After three months, many villagers said, “We understand that God loves us. But how do we show God that we love Him back?”

Sun thought to himself, “Yes. When we know someone loves us, we want to show that we love that person, too.” Sun knew it was time to teach the villagers deeper Bible truth.

For the next three months, Sun taught the villagers about the seventh-day Sabbath. He taught them about clean foods and foods that weren't clean. He taught them about tithes and offerings, and other Bible teachings. Tithe is the money we owe God. Tithe is 10% of all the money we get. Many villagers accepted the Bible teachings. The villagers wanted to know how to love God. The Bible teachings showed them the way.

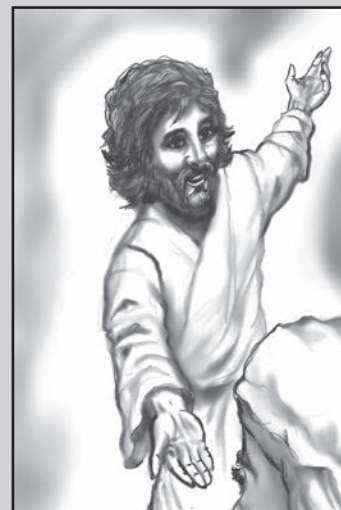
Sun served as a Bible worker for ten months. For three months, Sun helped the villagers. For the next three months, he told them Bible stories about God's love. For the final three months, Sun taught them deeper Bible truths. Sun had one month left to say goodbye. Sun spent the last month going door-to-door, inviting people to follow Jesus. Then Sun said to the villagers, “I'm leaving soon. I would like you to join my church. My church has blessed my life so much. I want you to be blessed, too.” Many townspeople accepted Sun's invitation.

Ellen G. White writes, “Jesus' plan is the only plan that will give us real success in touching people's hearts. The Savior made friends with people. He wanted what was best for them. He showed them that He cared. He helped them and took care of their needs. Jesus won their hearts. Then He invited them to ‘Follow Me.’”—*The Ministry of Healing*, page 143, adapted. For ten months, Sun followed Jesus' plan. He made friends in the village. He showed the villagers he cared about them. He helped them. He won their trust. Then Sun invited them to follow Jesus.

Today, Sun is a full-time Bible worker. He is a manager for the 1,000 Missionary Movement, in Silang, Philippines. The headquarters were built with help of the 13th Sabbath Offering from 1996. Sun says, “Being a Bible worker is the best job on earth. Bible workers must do more than give Bible studies. We must show Jesus in our lives.”

Thank you for your 13th Sabbath Offering this week.

INSIDE *Story*



“Jesus won people's hearts. Then He invited them to ‘Follow Me.’”



Kim Sun