Unit 8

God Gives His People a Home

Joshua

Memory Verses

“This book of instruction must not depart from your mouth; you are to meditate on it day and night so that you may carefully observe everything written in it. For then you will prosper and succeed in whatever you do. Haven’t I commanded you: be strong and courageous? Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”

—Joshua 1:8-9
The Call to Courage

SESSION IN A SENTENCE: God goes before His people with power to give us courage to follow wherever He goes.

MAIN PASSAGES: Joshua 1:6-9; 3:5-8,14-17; 4:20-24

If you had a do-over for any day in your past, where would you use it?

A hypothetical do-over typically involves some regret, but starting over in reality often comes with a sense of power and freedom.

- Sports fans understand that the start of each new season brings with it the ability to put any woes of the prior season in the past and replace them with hope for what lies ahead, at least for a game or two.
- Some of the best entrepreneurs look back at a time when they failed and were forced to start over as the key moment that led to their success.
- Sometimes we experience the gift of a new start in small, ordinary ways: tossing a failed recipe and starting over from scratch, erasing an email draft and writing it over, or stopping a difficult conversation midway through and asking the other person if you can start over again.

The Book of Joshua in the Bible is a do-over God granted the next generation of Israelites after wandering in the wilderness for forty years because of the unbelief and disobedience of the previous generation. But would they do what their parents and grandparents had failed to do—would they trust God and follow His commands?
Point 1: God goes with His people to give them strength and courage (Josh. 1:6-9).

6 “Be strong and courageous, for you will distribute the land I swore to their fathers to give them as an inheritance. 7 Above all, be strong and very courageous to observe carefully the whole instruction my servant Moses commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right or the left, so that you will have success wherever you go. 8 This book of instruction must not depart from your mouth; you are to meditate on it day and night so that you may carefully observe everything written in it. For then you will prosper and succeed in whatever you do. 9 Haven’t I commanded you: be strong and courageous? Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

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Why would God repeatedly instruct Joshua to “be strong and courageous”? For starters, Joshua needed to hear this message. He needed the encouragement because of the challenge that was before him. Joshua was to be strong and courageous first, to conquer and distribute the land (v. 6), second, to observe carefully God’s instruction (vv. 7-8), and third, because God was with him (v. 9).

What are some ways can we know and experience the presence of God?
Point 2: God goes before His people to demonstrate His power (Josh. 3:5-8,14-17).

5 Joshua told the people, “Consecrate yourselves, because the LORD will do wonders among you tomorrow.” 6 Then he said to the priests, “Carry the ark of the covenant and go on ahead of the people.” So they carried the ark of the covenant and went ahead of them.

7 The LORD spoke to Joshua: “Today I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, so they will know that I will be with you just as I was with Moses. 8 Command the priests carrying the ark of the covenant: When you reach the edge of the water, stand in the Jordan.”

14 When the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carried the ark of the covenant ahead of the people. 15 Now the Jordan overflows its banks throughout the harvest season. But as soon as the priests carrying the ark reached the Jordan, their feet touched the water at its edge 16 and the water flowing downstream stood still, rising up in a mass that extended as far as Adam, a city next to Zarethan. The water flowing downstream into the Sea of the Arabah—the Dead Sea—was completely cut off, and the people crossed opposite Jericho. 17 The priests carrying the ark of the LORD’s covenant stood firmly on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan, while all Israel crossed on dry ground until the entire nation had finished crossing the Jordan.

God commanded that the ark of the covenant, carried on the shoulders of priests, lead the way through the Jordan River and into the promised land. The ark represented the word, power, and presence of God. God was making it clear from the start of the conquest that He would lead the way and win the victory. The still waters and dry riverbed for passage as soon as the priests’ stepped in proved His power once again.

God Is Omnipotent: God is all-powerful: there is nothing God cannot do so long as it does not ________________ His own nature or law. God has _____________ and ________________ over the universe He created, from the largest solar system to the smallest particle.

How do we witness the power of God today?
Point 3: God calls His people to remember and testify to what He has done (Josh. 4:20-24).

20 Then Joshua set up in Gilgal the twelve stones they had taken from the Jordan, 21 and he said to the Israelites, “In the future, when your children ask their fathers, ‘What is the meaning of these stones?’ 22 you should tell your children, ‘Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.’ 23 For the LORD your God dried up the water of the Jordan before you until you had crossed over, just as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which he dried up before us until we had crossed over. 24 This is so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD’s hand is mighty, and so that you may always fear the LORD your God.”

Twelve stones set up in Gilgal, the Israelites’ battle camp, would provide a reminder of God’s faithfulness and plan for generations. But God didn’t want the people to take just any stones. They were to take stones from the middle of the Jordan River (4:5), which was also where the priests stood firm with the ark (4:10). Taking stones from this spot represented at least three things: the point of God’s providence, the point of greatest danger, and the point of the people’s faith.

What stones of remembrance have you set up, or can you set up, to help you remember our powerful and faithful God?

The Israelites’ memory of God’s power and provision was not only for those who made the journey across the Jordan but was also for their descendants. As the people continued to grow, children who had not witnessed the river crossing would see the stones and be prompted to ask about them. The stones, then, offered God’s people a way to remember God and to proclaim His glory.

How can you use what God has done, your stones of remembrance, to point others to the power and beauty of the gospel?

Voices from the Church

“Memory is the mother of traditions. Almost all of our special days are celebrated because they remind us of something significant in the past … Our celebrations are occasions to look back and remember what God has done in the world and in our lives.”

—Noël Piper

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My Mission

Because Christ has gone before us in death and resurrection and provided salvation, we recount all of God’s mighty works to others so that they too may know Him and His power and be received into His kingdom.

- What steps of faith are you being led to take by the omnipotent God?
- How has God worked in the life of your group, and how can your group commemorate His work together?
- What are some opportunities you have to share of God’s power and provision in Jesus Christ for the salvation of all who believe in Him?

Notes
Moses had led the children of Israel for four decades. He was one constant for a people who had wandered in the wilderness as an entire generation died off, one thing they could depend on. But then he too was gone. The Book of Joshua opens by stating his death in a rather matter-of-fact manner: Moses was dead and now God spoke to Joshua. But we cannot underestimate the impact his loss surely had on a people who stood at the border of the promised land, preparing to go to war. The people were vulnerable, and this could have been a crushing blow for them, a demoralizing loss.

But God, of course, understood. He knew Joshua would need encouragement, and He knew the people would need it as well. But He also knew the people needed something else more—they needed Him. Good leaders are a gift from God. Great leaders are a blessing. But no leader, no matter how good he or she might be, is a substitute for God Himself. Moses was not who the Israelites needed. Neither was Joshua. Nor would it be any of the judges, Samuel, Saul, David, Solomon, any other king, or any other prophet. The leader the people needed was God, who would one day come in the form of a man—Christ Jesus, the One whom God provided to lead us out of bondage to sin and into the rest of salvation in Him.

Have you ever lost a significant leader? What was the effect of that loss on you and others?

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Voices from Church History

“Let the past sleep, but let it sleep in the sweet embrace of Christ, and let us go on into the invincible future with Him.”

–Oswald Chambers
(1874-1917)
Day 2: Read Joshua 1:10-18

We love rest, although most of us don’t get nearly enough of it. Instead, we tend to wear ourselves out, always going and always adding to our bloated schedules. Yet the hope of rest—the potential of a weekend of rest or retirement at some point—continues to lure us. Maybe one day we will finally find the rest we want and need.

As the children of Israel prepared to enter the land, don’t miss God’s promise of the rest they would find there (v. 13). Think about it: This was a people who had never had rest. Those who were children forty years before had left slavery in Egypt, where there had been no rest. Then for the next forty years, they and all who were born were always on the move. Now, at the border of the promised land, they were about to go to war. But God was not just going to give them the land, He was going to give them rest.

We know from the Book of Hebrews that the rest in the promised land was a shadow of the greater rest we find in our salvation in Christ. In Christ, we are able, for the first time ever, to cast aside our labor—our numerous attempts to be right with God—and instead rest in Christ as recipients of God’s forgiveness and righteousness in Him. This is the rest our souls need. This is the rest the gospel gives.

What are some ways you need to stop working and rest in Christ?

Day 3: Read Joshua 3:1-17

God was about to do a mighty work before His people. They were about to see the swollen banks of the Jordan River become dry. They were about to cross through a dry riverbed as their parents had done forty years before as they passed through the Red Sea to escape Pharaoh’s army. But they had to do something first. They had to consecrate themselves. Why? Because if their minds and hearts were not ready, not open to consider the glory of God, they would miss it, even if it was right in front of their faces. Doubt it? Go back and look at what happened to their parents in the Book of Exodus. Time after time, they had seen God’s mighty hand work only to miss it because they were not in the right heart posture to receive it.

And the same can be true of us. We too need to consecrate ourselves day by day, moment by moment. God is at work all around us everyday, but will we see it?

What are some ways you can consecrate yourself each day to see what God is doing and follow Him?
Day 4: Read Joshua 4:1-16

When you first read Joshua 4:14, you might reflexively read it a second time: God exalted Joshua? Shouldn’t it be the other way around? The Creator doesn’t exalt His creation; creation is to exalt its Creator. The key to understanding this verse is to look ahead to Joshua 4:24. God exalted Joshua, as He had Moses, for a reason—so that He in turn would be exalted even more. What the Israelites would see Joshua do was not intended to stop there; it was to be a conduit pointing people to the One who was truly at work: God.

Do we see ourselves as Joshuas? Do we understand that God has positioned us where He has, and how He has, for a reason—to glorify God? Or are we tempted to steal God’s glory instead, to take how He has gifted and blessed us and hoard it for ourselves? May we hold loosely to our glory and tightly to God’s.

How can you point others to God this week through how He has blessed and gifted you?

Day 5: Read Joshua 4:17-24

We would be wise to understand this passage in light of Deuteronomy 6:4-9. In that passage, known as the Shema, God commanded one generation to teach the law to the next. But here we see that it wasn’t to stop there. Each generation was also to share what God had done for them. This coupling, the words and works of God together, provides a fuller picture of who God is and helps future generations see His beauty and splendor.

While the primary context of these two passages focuses on parents, it is broader than that. All of us are called by God to disciple others, and this is to be our blueprint of discipleship. We are to teach others God’s Word, but we are also to testify to how God has been kind to us. We are to talk about His provision, His protection, and His power. We are to celebrate who He is and what He has done.

What are some of the “stones of remembrance” that you can share with others to point them to who God is and what He has done?
Encourage One Another

**Join together with 2-4 people from your group, or with your family, sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and you are responding.**

Share your thoughts and reflections on the truths from Scripture in this session:

- God goes with His people to give them strength and courage (Josh. 1:6-9).
- God goes before His people to demonstrate His power (Josh. 3:5-8, 14-17).
- God calls His people to remember and testify to what He has done (Josh. 4:20-24).

**How have you responded to these truths from Scripture?**

**What sorts of activities or disciplines make you feel the most encouraged in your faith? What can you do this week to impart these ways of being encouraged to fellow believers?**

**In what ways does your church/group help believers remember and testify to what God has done? How can you improve at this?**

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UNIT 7
SESSION 1
1. Tony Evans, Tony Evans’ Book of Illustrations (Chicago, IL: Moody, 2009) [eBook].

SESSION 2

SESSION 3

SESSION 4
1. Amy Carmichael, Thou Givest … They Gather (Fort Washington, PA: CLC Publications, 1958) [eBook].

UNIT 8
SESSION 1
1. Noel Piper, Treasuring God in our Traditions (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2003), 64.

SESSION 2

SESSION 3
1. Betsie ten Boom, quoted in The Hiding Place, by Corrie ten Boom with Elizabeth and John Sherrill (Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 2006), 84.

EASTER SESSION

UNIT 9
SESSION 1
1. Andrew Murray, Abide in Christ, in The Essential Works of Andrew Murray, ed. Tracy M. Sumner (Barbour, 2008) [eBook].

SESSION 2

SESSION 3

SESSION 4

SESSION 5
In these sessions of The Gospel Project, we experience some of the most exciting narratives in Scripture. There are accounts here of sin and judgment, of moral decline and merciful intervention, and of rescuers who need rescue. Through it all, one thing is clear: God is with His people and He is faithful to His promise.

It’s important to keep that central theme in mind because many people read these stories about the conquest of the land and try to find examples for emulation. To be clear, we can learn a lot from these Old Testament heroes (see 1 Cor. 10), but we cannot implement their virtues apart from our connection to the Vine—Jesus Christ Himself, the One who bears fruit in us and through us.

As we walk through our present wilderness, struggling against sin and encountering sorrow, we know that the God who has gone before us is faithful. He is the One who prepares the way for us to be His ambassadors. He is the One who breaks the chains of our idolatry and lifts our gaze to His unchanging glory.