Unit 8, Session 3

The Provision of Peace

Summary and Goal
In the previous session, the Israelites began their campaign to conquer the promised land with a victory over the fortified city of Jericho. We saw that God provided the victory and how Rahab was spared and brought into the people of God. Next, the Israelites suffered defeat at the city of Ai because they failed to follow God’s instructions, but then they were given victory over that same city after they repented. In this session, we will see that Israel had learned an important lesson: Victory was theirs if they obeyed God, but defeat was certain if they relied upon themselves.

Session Outline
1. God promises victory for His people over their enemies (Josh. 10:1-8).
2. God fights for His people in miraculous ways (Josh. 10:9-15).
3. God gives His people land and peace (Josh. 11:23).

Session in a Sentence
God fights for His people to provide the victory.

Christ Connection
God fought for Joshua and the Israelites, giving them victory over their enemies and peace in the land. God has provided victory over sin and death for us through His Son’s death and resurrection. Through Jesus we have peace with God.

Missional Application
Because Christ fought the battle against sin and death and won the victory through His life, death, and resurrection, we proclaim Him to others so that they too may find peace through Him.
INSTRUCT: As group members arrive, ask them to make their guesses for the questions in the table in their DDG (p. 66). Begin this introduction with providing the answers and information below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUMBER OF YEARS OF PEACE IN RECORDED WORLD HISTORY</th>
<th>NUMBER OF DEATHS FROM WAR IN RECORDED WORLD HISTORY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>268 of the last 3,400 years</td>
<td>150 million to 1 billion people</td>
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- Reportedly, the world has been at peace only 268 of the last 3,400 years. In other words, only 8 percent of recorded history has known worldwide peace. The 3,100-plus years of war have led to the deaths of anywhere from 150 million to 1 billion people, 108 million of those in the twentieth century.¹

Commentary: As of 2018, surveying a wide array of factors, these thirteen countries are ranked the most peaceful in the world by the Institute for Economics & Peace: Iceland, New Zealand, Austria, Portugal, Denmark, Canada, Czech Republic, Singapore, Japan, Ireland, Slovenia, Switzerland, and Australia.²

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

Why do you think war has been such a large part of human society? (be prepared to give an answer of your own to jump-start the conversation)

EXPLAIN: Note that the Israelites in the Old Testament were no strangers to war either.

- Abraham, the father of the Israelites, defeated four kings to rescue his nephew Lot (Gen. 14:1-16).
- Moses raised his hands—with a little help—over a battle of self-defense with the Amalekites soon after the Israelites escaped from Egypt, and though they had received no battle training, God’s people defeated the Amalekite army (Ex. 17:8-16).
- God even commanded the Israelites to war with some of the surrounding peoples, dispensing His judgment in His strength on sinners, not unlike how God would discipline them with foreign nations.

SUMMARIZE: In the previous session, the Israelites began their campaign to conquer the promised land with a victory over the fortified city of Jericho. Next, the Israelites suffered defeat at the city of Ai because they failed to follow God’s instructions, but then they were given victory over that same city after they repented. In this session, we will see that Israel had learned an important lesson: Victory was theirs if they obeyed God, but defeat was certain if they relied upon themselves.

For additional teaching options and other resources, please visit www.GospelProject.com/additional-resources.
**Point 1: God promises victory for His people over their enemies (Josh. 10:1-8).**

**SAY:** When the Gibeonites in the promised land heard about how Jericho and Ai had fallen, they went to visit Joshua and asked for a treaty of peace. But knowing the Israelites’ intent to destroy all the peoples of the land, the Gibeonites pretended they had journeyed from far away. Joshua failed to consult God and fell for the ruse. So they were allowed to live as slaves in service to the house of God, but some other Canaanite kings felt betrayed.


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1 Now King Adoni-zedek of Jerusalem heard that Joshua had captured Ai and completely destroyed it, treating Ai and its king as he had Jericho and its king, and that the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel and were living among them. 2 So Adoni-zedek and his people were greatly alarmed because Gibeon was a large city like one of the royal cities; it was larger than Ai, and all its men were warriors. 3 Therefore King Adoni-zedek of Jerusalem sent word to King Hoham of Hebron, King Piram of Jarmuth, King Japhia of Lachish, and King Debir of Eglon, saying, 4 “Come up and help me. We will attack Gibeon, because they have made peace with Joshua and the Israelites.” 5 So the five Amorite kings—the kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon—joined forces, advanced with all their armies, besieged Gibeon, and fought against it.

6 Then the men of Gibeon sent word to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal: “Don’t give up on your servants. Come quickly and save us! Help us, for all the Amorite kings living in the hill country have joined forces against us.” 7 So Joshua and all his troops, including all his best soldiers, came from Gilgal.

8 The Lord said to Joshua, “Do not be afraid of them, for I have handed them over to you. Not one of them will be able to stand against you.”

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**EXPLAIN:** Use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 67) to highlight that the Israelites could have taken the “safe” route and stayed home, but they took the truly safe route by keeping their oath and honoring God.

An alliance of five kings attacked Gibeon, so they sent word to Joshua for help. Often in their history, Israel had avoided risk and chosen the “safe” route, even if that route meant departing from God and His ways. But here they kept their oath and marched to defend a people who had tricked them—this was truly the safe route.

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- The previous generation of Israelites often took things into their own hands instead of trusting in God. They had tried to gather more manna than was allowed because they couldn’t trust God’s provision. They had created a golden calf when Moses was absent for what seemed to be too long. They had refused to go into the promised land because they feared the people of the land would wipe them out.

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**FILL IN THE BLANKS:** Provide group members with the answers for the call-out in their DDG (p. 67) by reading the extended quote from Betsie ten Boom.

“There are no ‘ifs’ in God’s world. And no places that are safer than other places. The center of His will is our only safety.”³ —Betsie ten Boom

**Commentary:** Betsie ten Boom was the sister of Corrie ten Boom, a survivor of a German concentration camp during World War II. These sisters, along with their father, were Christians who worked to help Jews survive the brutal policies of the Nazis in German-occupied Holland. For their brave efforts, they were arrested and imprisoned like the Jews they tried to save. Betsie and their father both perished in their imprisonment, but their faith and wisdom are recorded in Corrie’s book *The Hiding Place.*

**EXPLAIN:** Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 67) to show that Joshua committed himself and his army in keeping with his word to the Gibeonites, and God would use this circumstance to fulfill His promises to Israel.

Though the Israelites faced a daunting battle, God’s first instruction to their leader was not to be afraid—God would give them victory. What appeared from a human perspective to be a great risk and the fallout of Joshua’s rash promises was actually God’s way of delivering five kings and their armies into Israel’s hands.

**SAY:** Once again we see God reminding Joshua that victory was based on who He is and what He would do, not on who the Israelites were and what they could do. Though this situation came about from deception, none of it was outside of God’s plan to make good on His promise to give His people the land. God was going to be glorified, even through the trickery of the Gibeonites and the rash promises of Joshua.

**INTERACT:** Ask group members the following question.

> How is it comforting to know that God can be glorified and bring good from anything, even our mistakes? (though we make mistakes, God is not finished with us and continues to use us for His glory and our good; our struggle with temptation and sin does not disqualify us as sons and daughters of God; God’s eternal promises do not rest on our ability to be perfect in His sight)
**Point 2: God fights for His people in miraculous ways (Josh. 10:9-15).**


9 So Joshua caught them by surprise, after marching all night from Gilgal. 10 The LORD threw them into confusion before Israel. He defeated them in a great slaughter at Gibeon, chased them through the ascent of Beth-horon, and struck them down as far as Azekah and Makkedah. 11 As they fled before Israel, the LORD threw large hailstones on them from the sky along the descent of Beth-horon all the way to Azekah, and they died. More of them died from the hail than the Israelites killed with the sword.

12 On the day the LORD gave the Amorites over to the Israelites, Joshua spoke to the LORD in the presence of Israel:
   “Sun, stand still over Gibeon, and moon, over the Valley of Aijalon.” 13 And the sun stood still and the moon stopped until the nation took vengeance on its enemies.
   Isn’t this written in the Book of Jashar?
   So the sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed its setting almost a full day.

14 There has been no day like it before or since, when the LORD listened to a man, because the LORD fought for Israel.

15 Then Joshua and all Israel with him returned to the camp at Gilgal.

**EXPLAIN:** Reference the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 68) to emphasize the Israelites’ weakened state so they could see the Lord demonstrate His omnipotence over nations and nature.

When the Israelite army drew near Gibeon, they were worn out. Yes, they had caught the alliance of five kings by surprise, but they had marched all night to do so. Their advantage was lessened by their weakened state, which was exactly what God wanted. He wanted them to remember and to know that He is the Lord who fights on behalf of His people and that He is omnipotent over nations and nature.

- God’s strength is made known most clearly through the weaknesses of His people (2 Cor. 12:9). Notice who acted in these verses. The Lord was the One who threw the opposing armies into confusion. He was the One responsible for the great slaughter of the people’s enemies. He was the One who threw large hailstones that killed more enemy soldiers than the sword. God had told Joshua that He would hand the enemy over to the Israelites, and that is precisely what He did.

- God did not just give His people the victory; He displayed for them, and all the people in the land, something else quite important: He is omnipotent. Even nature is under His sovereignty, as seen on this occasion in the hailstones he threw and the sun and the moon standing still. This was not a new lesson for the Israelites—they had seen God hold back the waters of the Jordan and had heard the stories of God’s mighty works in the exodus—but this was a lesson that deserved repeating. God wanted His people to trust in Him and His might, not in themselves.
FILL IN THE BLANKS: Provide group members with the answers for the call-out in their DDG (p. 68).

Miracles: A miracle is an event in which God makes an exception to the natural order of things for the purpose of demonstrating His glory. Because we believe God to be all-powerful and personally involved in this world, we believe He can and does perform miracles.

Essential Doctrine “Miracles”: A miracle is an event in which God makes an exception to the natural order of things, or supersedes natural laws, for the purpose of demonstrating His glory and/or validating His message. Miracles are recorded throughout Scripture; miraculous signs and wonders were oftentimes evident when a prophet or an apostle was speaking God’s message to the people. Because we believe God to be all-powerful and personally involved in this world, we believe He can and does perform miracles.

EXPLAIN: Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 68) to highlight Joshua’s prayer in faith for the sun and the moon to stop their movement through the sky so the Israelites could finish the battle. Then connect Joshua’s faithful prayer to the battles everyone faces and how we should also respond in faith.

Joshua knew the battle was the Lord’s and that the victory was secure, but he needed more daylight for his forces to see the battle through to the end. So he prayed in faith and commanded the sun and moon to halt their march across the sky, and God answered Joshua’s prayer. Then the army demonstrated their faith and obedience as they cast aside their exhaustion and kept fighting until the victory was won.

- We’re all fighting battles right now. It might be a physical battle, full of sickness or pain. Or perhaps it is an emotional one, and your enemy is depression or anxiety. Perhaps your battle is within your family; you’re fighting for your marriage, for the well-being of your children, or for the salvation of a loved one. Or your battle might be against yourself—your pride, your ambition, or your own agenda.
- Regardless of the battle, you must turn away from relying on your own strength to fight. You are not enough. The battle is not yours to win; it is God’s to win for you. You won’t get through this alone; instead, turn to the only One who can and will get you through the battle in victory. Saturate yourself in His Word and His promises, spend time in His presence, and thank Him for His providence. Praise Him for the glory that will be all His. And though you are tired and worn, dare to pray for more sunlight so the fight can wage on unto total victory.

INTERACT: Ask group members the following question.

How does God’s omnipotence encourage you in your circumstances? (be prepared to give an answer of your own to jump-start the conversation)
Point 3: God gives His people land and peace (Josh. 11:23).

SAY: While the sun hung on, the Israelites chased down and slaughtered most of the remaining armies and Joshua captured and killed the five kings. The battle was finally over, but the war was not. The next chapter and a half records with a blistering pace how Joshua completed the conquest of both southern and northern Canaan. Then comes the following summary.

READ: Ask a volunteer to read Joshua 11:23 (DDG p. 69).

23 So Joshua took the entire land, in keeping with all that the LORD had told Moses. Joshua then gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal allotments. After this, the land had rest from war.

PACK ITEM 6: THE CONQUEST MAP: Use this map to help summarize the central, southern, and northern campaigns of the Israelites’ conquest of the promised land.

• Joshua and the Israelite army entered the promised land near Jericho, about the midpoint as you traveled through the land north to south. In their central campaign, God handed Jericho and Ai over to them (Josh. 6–8).

• The southern campaign involved the defense of Gibeon against the army of five kings and clearing out numerous cities in the area (Josh. 9–10). The Israelite army was victorious “because the LORD, the God of Israel, fought for Israel” (10:42).

• In Joshua 11, more kings heard of the Israelites’ success, mounted armies together, and attacked. In God’s power and providence, Joshua led the Israelites in the northern campaign, which began with a victory over an alliance as numerous as “the sand on the seashore” (11:4), followed by numerous battles and sieges as the Israelites conquered city after city of their enemies.

EXPLAIN: Use the first paragraph in the DDG (p. 69) to explain the purposes for this conquest: 1) fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham; 2) fulfillment of God’s word to Moses; 3) judgment on the sinful nations of Canaan; and 4) so God would be glorified by the Israelites and in the world.

God had promised to give this land to Abraham and his descendants, and God had told Moses that His people would conquer it and inhabit it. It was His land to give; it did not belong to the nations within it. And to be clear, they were not innocent victims: the Canaanites were idolaters, rebels against God whom God had given time to repent, but instead, they continued in their sin (see Gen. 15:16). As long as these people dwelled in the land and God’s people were outside of the land, God’s glory was veiled. This was why their fight was worth it. Though it took much time and effort for the Israelites (Josh. 11:18), God made His people victorious and they received their promised land.
**INTERACT:** Ask group members the following question.

What are the benefits of perseverance in the faith? *(realizing God's promises; growing in the faith and growing in endurance through trials and temptations; demonstrating a bold witness to the goodness, greatness, and glory of God)*

**EXPLAIN:** Use the second paragraph in the DDG (p. 69) to highlight the benefit of *peace* for the people's endurance in their faith to obey God’s command to conquer the promised land. But emphasize that their peace and rest in the land were a picture of a greater rest to come, the spiritual rest found only in Jesus.

The Israelites had endured a lengthy war in conquest of the promised land, but God had given them victory—the land was theirs. Then God gave them something else that they desperately needed: *peace*. Rest for the land ravaged by war. Rest for the battered and worn out bodies and minds of God’s people. But the Israelites’ physical, emotional, and mental rest in the land was a picture of a greater rest to come for us all: the spiritual rest we find only in Jesus (Matt. 11:28-30).

**PACK ITEM 9: ETERNAL PEACE:** Point group members to the John Huss quote on this poster. Make the connection between God’s victory and peace for the people in the promised land with Jesus’ victory and peace for us over sin and death: Just as God went before His people in battle in Israel, He went before us in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, who conquered sin and death in our place. When we trust in Jesus, God gives us the victory over our unbeatable foes and gives us the peace and rest we need, leading to eternal salvation and living out our salvation each day.

**INTERACT:** Ask group members the following question.

What will it look like to rest in Christ's victory over sin and death? *(resting in Christ means we will endure in hope through the trials and temptations of this age, knowing our final victory is coming; we will fight against temptation and sin with confidence of success because Christ has already won our victory; the believer can look at death as “falling asleep” until the final victory over death results in our resurrection and everlasting rest with God)*
EXPLAIN: Just as the people of Israel found themselves in the midst of battles, we as children of God through faith in Jesus find ourselves battling against evil and oppression, sin and temptation, idolatry and destruction. In Christ’s army, figuratively speaking, there are no conscientious objectors, no pacifists. We are all called to gear up and get ready for battle (see Eph. 6:10-18). God fought for Joshua and the Israelites, giving them victory. Today, God has provided us victory over sin and death through Jesus’ death and resurrection, and we have the peace of God in the midst of a world without peace, just as Jesus promised (John 16:33). But our victory and peace through Christ are not for us alone. We are called to share Jesus with all who will listen so they too might experience His victory and peace.

READ the following missional application statement in the DDG (p. 70), and encourage group members to choose at least one of the options below as a way to respond to the truth of God’s Word.

Because Christ fought the battle against sin and death and won the victory through His life, death, and resurrection, we proclaim Him to others so that they too may find peace through Him.

- How will you rest in the victory and peace Christ has won for us through His life, death, and resurrection?
- What are some ways your group can encourage you to stay in the fight against temptation and sin with God’s strength for the victory?
- This week, how will you point someone to the victory and peace found through faith in Jesus Christ?

CLOSE IN PRAYER: Father, You are the God who fights for His people’s salvation and rest. We are in awe of the power You display in conquering our enemies and are grateful for the grace You extend to us in allowing us to share in Your victory. Help us to trust in You as the God who goes before us. We thank You most of all for fighting for us in Your Son, Jesus, through whose life, death, and resurrection our greatest enemies in Satan, sin, and death have been defeated. May we move forward in mission in the strength of Your Holy Spirit, proclaiming Christ’s reign to the nations so they may believe in Him for victory and peace with You. Amen.

INSTRUCT: As your group departs, encourage group members to read and respond to the Daily Study devotions in their DDG (pp. 71-73), which build and expand upon the group study. Also advocate for small groups or families to use Encourage One Another (p. 74) for mutual accountability and fellowship grounded upon the foundation of God’s Word.
Daily Discipleship

Throughout the week following the session, use the ideas below to remind and encourage your group members to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. The Daily Study devotions in the DDG (pp. 71-73) will help group members get into God’s Word and study it for themselves. Encourage One Another (p. 74) will help group members and families fellowship with one another with purpose.

Daily Study

Brief daily devotions in the DDG (pp. 71-73) will help group members take initiative in their own discipleship.

- Make sure all group members have access to a Bible to read. Have some Bibles available to give to guests who may need one, or offer to get one and arrange a time to meet to give it and show how to navigate it for the devotions.

- Share the following idea from the devotion for Day 1 as a part of point 1 in the session: God put you in the path of your Gibeon. God has placed you in relationship for a purpose—don’t forget that.

Consider leading by example and reading the daily devotions yourself with your own DDG. Based on your study, use brief messages throughout the week (group text, email, social media) to encourage your group to keep up with their daily time in God’s Word and to live it out. Here are a couple of examples you can use:

- **Day 2:** “The phrase ‘but God’ is what enables us to cling to our faith even in the darkest nights of pain and suffering.”

- **Day 4:** “God was not just after a portion of faithful obedience; He was after full, faithful obedience.”

Visit www.GospelProject.com/Blog for additional content and resources you can use to help group members gain more insight into their daily studies. Send group members a link or a portion of a blog post or other content that you believe will be helpful and encouraging for their time in God’s Word.

Encourage One Another

This brief plan for fellowship and accountability in the group member’s DDG (p. 74) will help groups of 2-4 people to meet sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and they are responding. It could also be used for family discipleship with students and children who are using The Gospel Project in their groups.

- Encourage group members to check in this week with one another to ensure that no one is overwhelmed by trying to fight a daunting personal battle alone.

- See yourself as a member of the group who also needs encouragement in the faith, and participate in such a group this week.
Additional Commentary

Point 1: God promises victory for His people over their enemies (Josh. 10:1-8).

“Israel’s initial conquest took place in two major campaigns, a southern campaign and a northern one. The southern campaign began when a coalition of armies, led by the king of Jerusalem, attacked Gibeon and were defeated by Israelite forces in a surprise attack (Joshua 10:1-15). Then, after killing the kings of the defeated armies (Joshua 10:16-27), the Israelites swept through and destroyed a number of southern towns (Joshua 10:28-42), effectively clearing the hill country of Judea for settlement before returning to camp at Gilgal. The northern campaign, too, was instigated by Canaanites, with the king of Hazor in the lead (Joshua 11:1-5). Joshua defeated the northern coalition, also in a surprise attack, then destroyed the great city of Hazor (Joshua 11:6-15). This victory cleared the way for Israel to conquer the rest of the hill country and the Jordan valley (Joshua 11:16-22). Joshua 12 summarizes all the kings Israel defeated, both east of the Jordan and within Canaan.”

“The book of Joshua contains the first reference to Jerusalem (10:1). This city would become an important power center in the time of King David, who made it his capital (2 Sam. 5:6-10). At the time of Joshua, the king in Jerusalem was Adoni Zedek. He seems to have had some influence in the region for he managed to form a new coalition to stand up to the Israelites.”

“I have given them into your hands. Whatever questions were raised by Israel’s failure to ‘ask counsel from the Lord’ (9:14) before making a covenant with the Gibeonites, the Lord assures Joshua that he will be with him in defending the Gibeonites against the Jerusalem coalition. The past tense ‘have given’ is significant: God has decided on the outcome, but Israel must still do some hard fighting (cf. 1:3; 2:9,24; 6:2,16; 8:1; 10:19).”

Point 2: God fights for His people in miraculous ways (Josh. 10:9-15).

“Verses 11-14 summarize how the Lord fought for Israel. God’s part in the miracle was of primary significance. Had he not fought, Israel would not have won. Because he fought, Israel could not lose and needed only to follow up on the victory. God hears and responds to prayer elsewhere in Scripture (e.g. Num. 14:11-21; Deut. 9:19). But the wording here, listened to a man (lit ‘to the voice of a man’) is used with God as the subject elsewhere only in Numbers 21:3 and 1 Kings 17:22. In other contexts it can also mean ‘obey.’”
“Interpreters have proposed four major explanations of [10:12-15]: (1) the earth stopped its rotation, (2) a solar eclipse occurred, (3) an astrological omen took place, or (4) the passage is figurative, not literal. The second option is not plausible because the text does not state that the sun and moon darkened; they continued to shine but stopped moving (the verbal root dmm is best translated ‘to cease’). The third option suggests that Joshua employed a pagan form of prayer based upon the practice, found in other ancient Near Eastern cultures, of reading omens in the movement of heavenly bodies. This option is inconsistent with Joshua’s faithfulness to the Lord. The fourth option is not credible because vv. 13-14 state clearly that the sun and moon stopped their motion. The best way to understand these events is to accept the first option, according to the plain reading of the text. Through alteration of the earth’s rotation the apparent movement of the sun and moon across the sky was halted. The urban legend that Princeton scientists or NASA computers have ‘discovered’ Joshua’s long day has circulated for more than a half century. Though baseless, this fictitious ‘scientific’ explanation is still widely promoted.”  

**Point 3: God gives His people land and peace (Josh. 11:23).**

“Most of the land was now vacant and available for settlement, and Joshua took the entire land, just as the Lord had directed Moses, and he gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal divisions (11:23). God fought for Israel throughout and granted them the promised land. The faithfulness of the Lord was thus clearly demonstrated to his people.”

“The statement that ‘the land had rest from war’ clearly shows that the first section of the book is drawing to a close. This is the first mention of rest since Joshua spoke of it to the Transjordan tribes (1:13,15). The idea of rest for the entire nation from their enemies is found in such passages as Deuteronomy 12:10 and 25:19, and it is echoed in the summarizing passages in Joshua 21:44 and 23:1. In two places, we read that the land itself had rest from war (Josh. 11:23; 14:15; cf. Deut 12:9-10; 25:19; 2 Sam. 7:11,11; 1 Kings 8:56). This anticipates the same idea repeated several times in Judges: ‘So the land had rest X years’ (Judg. 3:11; 3:30; 5:31; 8:28).”

**References**

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.