

## Topic

Responding to God's faithfulness

## Theme

God calls believers to be faithful to Him in light of His faithfulness to them.

## Desired Learner Response

The learner will consider God's faithfulness in his life and consider areas of his life that he still needs to surrender to God's control.

#### Materials

* Resources 1 and14

**98**

Joshua's Farewell

Address

**Scripture Focus** Joshua 23 **Summary**

Joshua. nearing the end of his life, encouraged Israel to be obedient because God had been so faithful to them. As they obeyed God and put their faith in Him, they would realize continued victory in the land and a peaceful posses­ sion of it. Joshua also warned Israel that choosing disobedience would result in terrible consequences and eventually the loss of the land.

#### Outline

1. **Comforting Words (23:1-11)**
   1. God's past work (23:1-3)
   2. God's present work (23:4-11)
2. **Clear Warnings (23:12-16)**
   1. About clinging to the Canaanites (23:12, 13)
   2. About breaking the covenant (23:14-16)

**Memory Verse** *"One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the Lord your God, he it is thatfighteth for you,as he hath promised you.*

*Take good heed therefore unto yourselves,that ye love the Lord your God"*

*Ooshua 23:10,11).*



# GETTING STARTED

### Looking Back

**ASK:** How did your parents'faithfulness in caring for you affect your faithful­ ness to obey them as you were growing up?

**ASK:** What regrets about your obedience to your parents do you now have as you reflect on their IIves?

Joshua, a parent of sorts to the Israelites, encouraged them to be obedient because God had been so faithful to them. He also warned them that choosing disobedience would result in terrible consequences.

### I Love ...

**ASK:** Name some things you love that have been beneficial to your life. (Ql)

**ASK:** Name some things you love that have been detrimental to your life. (02)

What we choose to love will often affect our lives either positively or nega­ tively. Over the long haul, loving and consuming big piles of chocolate can have adverse effects on our bodies. Conversely, loving to run can have a positive effect on our bodies as long as we actually make the effort to run.

Joshua presented two choices to the children ofisrael. They could either cling to God and see success in the Promised Land, or they could cling to the remnant of Canaanites and be kicked out of the Promised Land. Joshua put forth God's faith­ fulness as the reason to choose to love God.

# SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

The days of youth and strong manhood for Joshua had passed. He had *waxed old and [was] stricken in age* (Josh. 23:1). The venerable old warrior's body no lon­ ger exhibited the exuberance and strength of youth, but Joshua was as spiritually vigorous as ever. Concerned for the welfare of Israel and the honor of the Lord, he summoned the tribes and leaders of Israel to hear his farewell.

1. **Comforting Words (23:1-11)**
   1. **God's past work (23:1-3)**

Joshua had journeyed with Israel through those forty years of wilderness wan­ deringswhen there weren't many who were true to the Lord. He could have lost heart and settled down toan *I-don't-care* kind of religious experience, as many others had done. Nearly everyone around him displayed spiritual indifference and carnality, but he resisted the spirit of the crowd and chose, instead, to live close to Jehovah. Near the end of his life, he would testifythat the Lord is good all the time.

Admitting that he was very old, Joshua commanded Israel's attention. He had

significant words of advice for the nation. Before launching into his counsel for the future, he summarized God's goodness in Israel's recent past.

**READ:** Joshua 23:3. **ASK:** How does reflecting on the Lord's goodness in the past encourage faithfulness to Him in the future? (Q3) *It provides real examples of God's power and faithfulness that encourage one's heart and mind.*

Joshua reminded the nation that the Lord had fought for them against Ca­ naan's nations and that, therefore, Joshua had been able to carve out land in Canaan for each tribe's inheritance.

* 1. **God's present work (23:4-11)**

Though much of the land was possessed, there was still work to do (23:4). Some of Israel's inheritance was still occupied by Canaanites. Joshua had no doubt God would chase all the Canaanites out of their inheritances so Israel could possess the land God promised to them (23:5). God would never be to blame for any failure to take all of the land of Canaan.

**ASK:** What were specific events in Canaan that showed the Lord's goodness to Israel? (Q4) *The parting of theJordan River,the collapse of Jericho's walls, the hailstorm on the fleeing armies of Canaanites.*

Joshua echoed God's call to Israel at the beginning of the conquest (1:7) to be *very courageous to keep and to do all that* is *written in the book of the law of Moses* (23:6). As they obeyed God's commands in the law of Moses, they would realize victory in the land. Israel could count on victory as they were obedient because God promised them that would happen in the Mosaic Covenant.

A focus on the book of the law of Moses would also keep Israel from becoming enamored with the gods of the Canaanites (23:7). Specifically, they would not call on the gods, swear by them, serve them, nor bow down to them. The Canaanites attributed the abundance of the land to their gods. They were convinced that their gods brought the rains that grew the crops that brought prosperity. Those Canaan­ ites who remained in the land would also be convinced that their gods must be more powerful than Jehovah. Otherwise, He would have used His people to kick them out of the land. Those convincing arguments were directly countered in the book of the law if the Israelites would just read it and live by it.

Exposure to the book of the law would cause Israel to *cleave unto the Lord* (23:8). The idea is to *ally* with the Lord or to identify with His side. His Word would be convincing for Israel. It would affect their hearts and minds so they would want to be on God's side and serve Him exclusively.

Joshua repeated again the fact that God had served them faithfully. A band of relatively inexperienced Israelites had invaded a land of giants, well-fortified cities, and well-trained armies; and to the Canaanites' surprise, Israel had won staggering victories over its foes. Joshua reminded the people, *No man hath been*

*able tostand before you unto thisday* (23:9). Such power would always be theirs if they would be faithful and obedient to the Lord.

**READ:** Joshua 23:10. **ASK:** What would happen if the Israelites held fast to

the Lord because they loved Him? (QS) *One man would beable to chose a thou­ sand because God would fight for him.*

**READ:** Joshua 23:11. **ASK:** How would Israel make sure they continued to love the Lord? (Q6) *By continuing to rehearse the recordofGod's work on their behalf, by acknowledging that the blessings were from Him, by singing His praises.*

If we love the Lord, we will obey Him and thereby avoid compromising our testimony. We cannot love the Lord and the world too.

1. **Clear Warnings (23:12-16)**
   1. **About clinging to the Canaanites (23:12, 13)**

The Canaanite lifestyle was appealing to the lust of the flesh for it involved sensuality. So God gave a clear warning concerning Israel's relationship with the Canaanites. They were not to *cleave* to and intermarry with the Canaanite remnant in the land (23:12). Even the strongest Israelite would fall into idolatry if he mar­ ried a pagan wife. King Solomon, the wisest man to ever live, proved that marriag­ es to pagan wives leads to idolatry (1 Kings 11:1-8). To participate in the worship of pagans and give

countenance to their gods would be to deny and to blaspheme the only God Who is God. The Canaanites were still Israel's enemy. Allying themselves with the enemy through marriage would mean enmity with God. God wisely forbade Israel to intermarry with the Canaanites (Exod. 23:30-33; Deut. 7:1-6).

Joshua spelled out the bitter consequences of disobeying the Lord. He said, *Know for a certainty that the Lord your God will no more drive out any of these na­ tions from before you; but they shall be snares and traps unto you, and scourges in your sides, and thorns in your eyes, until ye perishfrom off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you* (23:13). If the Israelites refused to love the Lord and obey His law; they would experience sorrow and trouble. They would be powerless against their enemies for God would no longer drive out the Canaanites from the land He had given to Israel. The Israelites would experience the tragedy of a lost inheritance.

**READ:** Joshua 23:13. **ASK:** Why would the words snares and traps be good descriptions of the Canaanites?(Q7) *Because developing a relationship with them would beappealing and seemingly harmless to the Israelites until it was too late and they suffered the consequences of their idolatry.*

The Israelites would have known the story of Lot that powerfully illustrates the truth that compromising with pagans leads to tragic personal loss. Although his soul was vexed in the wicked city of Sodom (2 Pet. 2:6-8), he stayed there until God forcibly took him out. He escaped God's judgment on Sodom, but

everything he owned there went up insmoke. His sullied testimony seemed like a joke to his sons-in-law, so they ignored his warning to flee the city. Ultimate­ ly Lot lost his two sons-in-law, his wife, his possessions, and the good name of his two daughters. He became a broken old man with a saved soul but a wasted life.

He might have enjoyed the same kind of blessings bestowed upon godly Abraham.

He might have inherited his own land, but he compromised his obedience to the Lord and ended his unenviable life in pathetic gloom and tragedy. The Israelites should have determined to trust and obey the Lord and thereby avoid Lot's sin.

The Israelites who heard Joshua's farewell address knew firsthand what had happened to their immediate ancestors because of disbelief and disobedience. Thousands upon thousands of graves in the wilderness told the sad story of their refusal to honor the Lord.

Like Lot and the Israelites in the wilderness, we can squander the best God has for those who love and obey Him. If we take our heart's focus off Him and place it on the world, we will forfeit rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Like Lot, we will not lose salvation, but we will lose the Lord's approval. What we value so highly now, we will see as worthless at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

* 1. **About breaking the covenant (23:14-16)**

In the midst of warning, Joshua announced that he would soon die (Josh.

23:14). However, he did not lapse into a pity party or seize the moment to eulogize himself. Instead he eulogized the Lord. *Ye know in all your hearts and in all your souls,* he told the Israelites, *that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof* (23:14).

**ASK:** Based on God's track record with Israel (Josh. 23:14), what are the only conclusions the Israelites should have made concerning God? (08) *That Heis good and trustworthy and that He had their best interests at heart.*

Israel had no reason to doubt God's goodness. Only an argument that He was holding back even more from them would give them a reason to turn their backs on Him. That is the argument Satan used with Eve (Gen. 3:1-6). He convinced her that God's abundant goodness in providing for her needs was just a cover to keep her from realizing something even bigger, something God was desperate to make sure she did not discover. Eve bought that lie from Satan and gave into temptation. She soon discovered that she should have trusted God's goodness after all (3:7-13).

The Canaanites would try to convince the Israelites that God must not love them if He required them toobey so many restrictions and tosay no toso many indulgences, including the Canaanite women. God, fully aware of the Israelites' propensity to temptation and the Canaanites' ability to create strong temptations, wanted Israel to understand His goodness and to trust Him fully.

God's testimony of His faithfulness to Israel ought to inspire us to look back upon our lives and affirm His faithfulness.If we examine our past, we will see that He has been good all the time. We fail Him at times, but He never fails us.

**ASK:** When have you been tempted to think that God was holding out on you and keeping you from really enjoying life? (09)

Joshua assured the Israelites that the Lord keeps not only His promises to bless obedience but also His promises to punish disobedience (23:15, 16). Achan found that out and stood as an example to the rest of the nation (7:20, 21).

**READ:** Joshua 23:15. **ASK:** What would happen if the Israelites allied them­ selves with the Canaanites and rebelled against God? (Ql O) *Hewould bring harmful things on them and destroy them from thegood land.*

Joshua told Israel that transgression's cost is heavy.If the Israelites trans­ gressed the Lord's covenant by bowing down to Canaan's gods, He would execute His wrath upon them. Idolatry would result in calamity and expulsion from the Promised Land. Obviously Israel would collapse before her enemies not because it lacked military might but because it lacked spiritual power.

**READ:**Joshua 23:16. **ASK:** Why should this verse be considered part of the goodness and grace God showed to Israel? (Ql 1) *Because in it God spellsout theconsequences if Israel violated His covenant with them.*

**ASK:** What would the Israelites have to conclude about God in order for them to ignore His warnings about being driven from the land because of their idolatry? (Ql 2) *That God was either lying when Hewarned them about the consequences of their disobedience or that He would bepowerless to enforce His discipline.*

**READ:** Isaiah 42:8. **ASK:** Why would God be so angry with Israel for trans­ gressing His covenant with them? What would be at stake?(Ql 3) *God would beangry because Israel would rob Him of His glory. God absolutely refuses for His glory to be given toanother.*

Although the Lord would not disown the Israelites who fell into disobedience, He would discipline them. Therefore, it would be far better for them to obey and enjoy His blessings than to disobey and experience His discipline. Of course if they believed God was holding back on giving them something better, then they would also believe His warnings about discipline were bogus too. Centuries later that is exactly what they concluded even after God sent them repeated rounds of prophets to warn them of coming judgment.

**READ:** 2 Chronicles 36:14-20. **ASK:** What eventually happened to Israel because of idolatry? (Ql 4) *God removed them from the Promised Land and sent them into captivity.*

We know the end of the story. God was not blowing hot air when He warned Israel about idolatry. His anger was eventually aroused to the point that there was no more remedy for Israel (2 Chron. 36:16). His compassion for them and His desire to see them live for Him and enjoy His blessings never failed (36:15). It was Israel that failed God by rejecting His warnings and even killing His prophets.

Those who attacked Israel did so out of hatred for God's people. They showed no compassion and treated them brutally (36:17). In the process, God's holy name was dragged through the streets of Jerusalem by Babylon as they took the precious implements of worship and then burned down the temple and the city that God had set up as a light to the world (36:18-20).

When we look to the end of God's story for Israel, we see Jesus enthroned

**Isaiah 42:18-25 describes Israel sitting** in **captivity wondering what went wrong. Isaiah called them blind and deaf. Obvi­ ously they failed in their mission to be a light to the Gentiles in that they didn't even see the light of God themselves.**

in Jerusalem and His glory shining brightly in this world (Isa. 42:1-9). Jesus will become the perfect light that Israel never could become. Only Jesus could properly shine God's glory in this world. When He comes, He will also open the eyes of Isra­ elso they might see His light and partake in the broadcast of that light according to God's plan (Isa. 60:1-3).

**RESOURCE:** Display resource 14 to summarize Israel's heart choice.

**Israel's Heart** Choice



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**God's Been Faithful**

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**ASK:** Recount three times when God has been faithful to you. (Q15)

**ASK:** How does recalling God's faithfulness to you affect your desire to be faithful to Him?(Q16)

**Progress Yet to Come**

**ASK:** What corners of your life still need surrendered to God? (Ql 7)

**ASK:** Have you given up the fight over that territory in your life? If so, how might a renewed confidence in God's faithfulness affect your battle? (Q18)

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**Summary and Memory Verses**

**RESOURCE:** Display resource 1. Add the following statement about God's faithfulness: God faithfulness encourages our faithfulness to Him.

Encourage learners to memorize Joshua ty tosay the verses in class next week.



23:10

and

11.

Give them an opportuni­