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*But seek first the kingdom of
God and his righteousness,
and all these things will be
provided for you.*

Matthew 6:33 (CSB)

a word from

PASTOR MATT READ

Hey Jersey,

I could not be more excited as we step into this new season together.

As you start this study, know that it's more than just pages filled with insight and reflection – it represents a powerful moment in the life of our church. Across every generation, in every group and service, we're taking this journey side by side. And we believe that when a church moves forward with one heart and one purpose, God shows up in extraordinary ways.

In the book of Joshua, God was doing more than leading His people into a new place – He was forming them into a people for His purpose. In the same way, we believe that God is shaping us for something significant.

Our vision won't come to life by strategy or effort alone – it will be birthed through prayer, courageous obedience, and hearts rooted in God's Word. This study is meant to help us do just that. As we open the Scriptures together, may we be reminded that every step forward is for His glory, not our own.

Jesus said, "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be provided for you" (Matthew 6:33). As we seek His Kingdom above all else, we can trust that He will provide everything we need for the journey ahead.

Let's be people who listen for God's voice, humbly serve those around us, and in all things seek His Kingdom.

We're in this together – For the Kingdom.

With anticipation,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pastor Matt". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Pastor" and "Matt" being capitalized and prominent.

INTRODUCTION

As God used Joshua to lead Israel into the Promised Land, He was not just giving them a place—but forming them for His purpose. In this new season at Jersey Church, we believe God is doing the same with us. We are stepping forward to glorify God by reaching the lost, discipling believers, and sending them out to begin Kingdom movements. This series will anchor us in God’s Word, call us to courageous obedience, and remind us that the victories ahead are for God’s glory—not ours. Just like Joshua, we follow a faithful God who leads, provides, and calls us to be all in—For the Kingdom.

SEPTEMBER 7

God Will Do It

JOSHUA 1:1-5

When was a time God called you to do something that felt overwhelming? How did you respond?

Life can be overwhelming. It can be difficult to navigate the everyday activities of life, let alone the areas we feel God has called us to step out in faith. In our own strength, this would be impossible. But we can be certain that when God calls us to something, He's not expecting us to rely on our own power or wisdom but fully on His.

THIS WEEK'S MEMORY VERSE

Joshua 1:3

"I have given you every place where the sole of your foot treads, just as I promised Moses."



Understand The Context

The Lord commissioned Joshua as Moses' successor (see Num. 27:18; Deut. 34:9) to lead Israel into the promised land. God instructed Joshua to be obedient to the law of Moses and to be courageous so that he might succeed.

Joshua commanded the officers of the camp to prepare the people for crossing the Jordan. He reminded the Transjordan tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh that they had committed themselves under Moses (see Num. 32) to cross and help their brothers.

The people agreed and echoed the exhortation of God to Joshua, "Only be strong and courageous!"

Joshua 1:1-5

*After the death of Moses the Lord's servant, the Lord spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses's assistant: **2** "Moses my servant is dead. Now you and all the people prepare to cross over the Jordan to the land I am giving the Israelites. **3** I have given you every place where the sole of your foot treads, just as I promised Moses. **4** Your territory will be from the wilderness and Lebanon to the great river, the Euphrates River—all the land of the Hittites—and west to the Mediterranean Sea. **5** No one will be able to stand against you as long as you live. I will be with you, just as I was with Moses. I will not leave you or abandon you.*

DAILY EXPLORATION

Use this section for your personal Bible study time before you meet with your group.

DAY 1

In Over Our Heads

Read Joshua 1:1-5.

When was the last time you were asked to do something that took you out of your comfort zone? Maybe you were asked to travel somewhere new, complete a task you'd never done before, or lead when you only have experience being a follower.

This is the position Joshua was in. Do you remember his story? When the Israelites scouted the promised land in Numbers 14, Joshua was one of only two scouts who didn't cower in fear of the people currently living there. Joshua (and Caleb) had full faith that when the Lord was with them, they would be victorious. Because of his faith, Joshua not only got to enter the promised land, but he was also chosen to lead the people into the land.

God gave Joshua a calling and He reminded Joshua that He would go with him. He does the same for us today. When He calls us, He goes with us.

How has God guided you in unfamiliar situations in the past?

Praise God for His constant presence and guidance. Thank Him for the times He has been there for you in the past and ask Him to help you follow His guidance in the future.

DAY 2

Live Unashamed

Read 2 Timothy 1:8–12.

Paul's reality was different than ours. For Paul, speaking up for the sake of the gospel meant risking his very life. Paul faced intense opposition, physical beatings, and wrongful imprisonment—all for the sake of the gospel. But he never stopped sharing.

In today's passage, Paul sought to encourage his young partner in ministry, Timothy, for the suffering and opposition he would face. Though the opposition we face may be different than what Paul and Timothy faced, Paul's words remain an encouragement.

Paul said God has not only given us the gift of salvation (we are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ) but also calls us to a purpose that glorifies Him. And this calling isn't because of any great things we have done; it's all because of God. God created you on purpose for a purpose. Just like He worked through Paul, God wants to work in and through you.

Do you feel encouraged or discouraged in your faith today? Why? How can you bring this before the Lord?

Praise God for the gift of salvation and for using us to work in the kingdom for His glory. Ask for His help as you seek to walk in His purposes today.

DAY 3

Walking with Us

Read Psalm 138:7-8.

King David wrote roughly half of the psalms in the Bible, and many feature themes like this one: praising God's provision and fully trusting in His guidance and presence.

David's life echoed a similar heart posture. When his back was against the wall, when circumstances seemed grim, and when he messed up, David turned to God, and God was there for Him as a steady presence in a turbulent life.

David deeply understood that He was created for God's purpose, not his own, and knew the Lord would fulfill His plans no matter what.

Even when times become difficult, God is working, and His purpose will be fulfilled. Just as God walked with David, God faithfully walks with us. God has given us each a calling. When He calls us, He doesn't send us out alone: *He goes with us.*

How has God walked with you through difficult situations in your past?

Thank God for His presence and faithful love. Thank Him for always being with you and ask for His continued help as you seek to be faithful to Him.

DAY 4

Not Finished Yet

Read Philippians 1:3–6.

Have you ever left a project half finished? Maybe you started organizing your closet but lost steam, started building that piece of furniture but never finished, or bought watercolors but never painted anything. Sometimes we leave things half-finished, but thankfully, we can count on the Lord to always finish what He starts.

The members of the church at Phillippi faithfully partnered with Paul in the work of the gospel, and Paul knew God would carry on the good work He had begun in them.

As His people today, God will also continue working in and through us for the rest of our lives. As David wrote in Psalm 138, God will not abandon us, the work of His hands. The Holy Spirit dwells in God's people and is always working in our lives. Will you join Him today?

How is God working in your life right now?

Thank God for continuing to work in and through you. Ask for His help as you endeavor to work faithfully for the kingdom.

DAY 5

Chosen for a Purpose

Read Ephesians 1:11-14.

God *will* accomplish His will. He always has and always will. There are no curveballs the enemy can throw that will derail God's plan. God "works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will" (v.11, NIV).

God picked us. Isn't that a wonderful thought? *God picked you.* He knit you together in your mother's womb (Psalm 139:13), and He knows the exact number of hairs on your head (Luke 12:7). He created you on purpose, for a purpose.

God has a purpose for our lives, and He wants us to participate in His plan. We were created to bring praise and glory to God, and one important way that we do that is *by sharing the gospel*.

How have you seen God's will accomplished in your life so far?

Thank God for being sovereign and in charge of all things, ready for any supposed curveball the enemy could throw. Pray that He would show you how He wants you to bring Him praise and glory in your daily life.

EXPLORE THE TEXT:

GROUP DISCUSSION

Main Point

When God calls us to do something, He works in us and through us to accomplish it.

Introduction

Look back on the first page of this week to discuss the intro.

We are beginning a new series today: For the Kingdom. In this series, we'll be talking about how God has a purpose for all of us: to share the gospel. The command to share the gospel was given by Jesus Himself in Matthew 28:19–20. It's a command not just for those who have accepted the calling into vocational ministry but for all of Jesus's followers. God placed you here—in Jersey Church, in your workplace, in your neighborhood, and in your social circles—on purpose, for a purpose. We'll consider how we can all work together as a church to share the gospel more widely in where God has placed us.

**Have you ever felt like God put you in a particular situation for a particular reason?
What happened?**

**When you think about talking to someone about Jesus, how do you feel? Nervous?
Eager? Excited?**

How has God accomplished things through you in the past?

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Ask a volunteer to read Joshua 1:1-5.

What significant shift took place in the life of Israel in these verses?

What might have made this time challenging or intimidating for God's people?

When have you faced a new challenge in life that required you to choose faith or fear?

Moses died and Joshua followed Moses as God's chosen leader of the Israelite people. Just as God worked powerfully through Moses to bring the Israelite people out of slavery in Egypt, God would work powerfully through Joshua as he led the people out of the wilderness and into the promised land. Our passage today records God speaking to Joshua after Moses's death.

At this point, Joshua had been faithfully following and trusting God in the wilderness for about forty years. When the Israelites scouted the promised land in Numbers 14, Joshua was one of only two scouts who didn't cower in fear of the people living there. Joshua (and Caleb) had full faith that when the Lord was with them, victory was certain. Because of his faith, Joshua was permitted enter the promised land even though all but one of his peers died in the wilderness. God also chose him to lead the people as they occupied the land.

This was a huge job, and lots of hard work was ahead of them! People occupied the land God had promised them, and for the Israelites to live there, they had to conquer those people. God gave them the land, but they still had to do the work to occupy it.

God had a purpose and a plan for Joshua, and it didn't look like anything he could have expected, but God called him to walk faithfully in it. God gave Joshua his marching orders: prepare to cross the Jordan River into "the land I am giving" you (v. 2).

Joshua and the Israelite people had to do the work, but don't miss who was responsible for the victory: the Lord. God promised the victory, but the people had to walk in faithful obedience to receive it. Though they hadn't stepped foot in the promised land as a people, God had already outlined the boundary lines (v. 4).

**How difficult do you find it to trust God in moments of significant transition?
What makes this challenging?**

What reassurance did God offer Joshua in verse 5?

What promises has God given us that can encourage us in uncertain times?

God was going to work through Joshua, and He wants to do the same through us. Can you believe that? God can do anything, and He wants to use us! He picked us to be a part of His plan and to help carry out His will.

Even better, we have the same promise Joshua received here: **God goes with us**. When He calls us to do something, He accompanies us and equips us to do it. God specializes in working in and through imperfect and unlikely people. He remains with us as we walk in faith (and even when we cower in fear) and guides and equips us as we walk out the purposes He has for us.

**How has God's presence encouraged you when you faced a new challenge?
Where do you need God's presence today?**

Application

Offer the following action steps for the application of God's word.

How has God provided for you in the past? How does that help you trust Him more today?

How have you seen God's plans play out in unexpected ways?

Who is God calling you to share Jesus with today? How is He equipping you for that even now?

Pray

Thank God for never leaving His people. Praise Him for not abandoning us even when we mess up and aren't fully obedient or faithful. Ask for His help as we think about what God has called us to do and how we can tell others about Jesus.

SEPTEMBER 14

For the Glory of God

JOSHUA 5:13-15

We live in a time that can be particularly divisive. Why is it that we often desire to “pick a side,” even when faithfulness to Jesus might require landing somewhere in the middle?

Whether it’s an election or a ball game, we naturally want to pick sides. Many of us have been raised with clear cut ideas about “good guys” and “bad guys” in the world. And while the Bible never shies away from right and wrong in the sight of God, not every matter or relationship is that clear cut. What is most important is that we are following God faithfully, no matter the situation. Today we will consider a time with Joshua asked a messenger from God to pick human sides, based on limited human perspective. But the messenger made it clear, he was on God’s side and it was the one Joshua needed to join as well.

THIS WEEK’S MEMORY VERSE

Joshua 5:15

The commander of the LORD’s army said to Joshua, “Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy.” And Joshua did that.



UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

God had promised his presence to Joshua (1:7–9), and here he began to fulfill it. Joshua encountered a man with a drawn sword. In Numbers 22:23 Balaam's donkey stopped before such a figure.

The man's title, "commander of the LORD's army" suggests someone of importance. The relevant question was not whether he was for or against Joshua, but how Joshua regarded him. Joshua bowed to worship. The man's command to remove his sandals evokes God's encounter with Moses at the burning bush (Ex 3:5). God appeared to Joshua before this great challenge to encourage him and to provide directions for what he should do.

Joshua 5:13-15

When Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua approached him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?"

14 *"Neither," he replied. "I have now come as commander of the LORD's army."*

Then Joshua bowed with his face to the ground in homage and asked him, "What does my lord want to say to his servant?"

15 *The commander of the LORD's army said to Joshua, "Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did that.*

DAILY EXPLORATION

Use this section for your personal Bible study time before you meet with your group.

DAY 1

Surrender to the Lord

Read Joshua 5:13–15.

After the death of Moses, God chose Joshua to lead His people into the land He had promised to give them. The book of Joshua, which includes the record of Joshua leading God's people, opens with this encouragement: God promised to go with him, never leaving or abandoning them.

In our passage today, we find Joshua on the road to Jericho and learn that the Lord was not only with Joshua, but He also sent Joshua help in the form of the commander of His army. God walked with them and equipped them for the victory He had planned. Note the answer given by the commander when Joshua asked if he was for the Israelites or their enemies: "Neither" (v. 14).

Joshua's mind and question was limited to a human perspective, but the Lord's emissary was not. He had come in support of the Lord. The mission and forthcoming victory—as well as the fame and glory that went along with it—belonged to the Lord, not the Israelites. God had a bigger plan in mind.

In response, Joshua surrendered and obeyed the Lord's plan. The victory at Jericho defied human logic. The people marched around the walls with the ark and blew trumpets, then God made the walls come tumbling down.

God crumbles walls the same way today when we obediently surrender to His plan—even when it doesn't make sense to us.

What "walls" have you seen God crumble in your life that didn't make sense? Where do you need Him to do this now?

Praise God for having a plan and sending us the help we need to walk out His will and purpose for our lives. Ask for His help surrendering to His plan for your future.

DAY 2

Rely on His Wisdom

Read Proverbs 3:5-6.

Don't rely on your own understanding? This doesn't make natural sense to us. We want to do things that are smart, logical, and wise, but the truth is God's plan doesn't always make human sense!

Consider the story of God bringing down the walls of Jericho. Yesterday, we read about how Joshua surrendered to the Lord's will, but do you remember the circumstance of the Israelite victory in Jericho? They didn't storm the city by any means that made sense by human logic. In fact, their method would have been laughable to a military strategist. Yet, they chose faithful obedience instead of pride and reliance on their own understanding. They simply walked around the wall as God instructed, and the Lord gave the victory.

This proverb encourages us to develop a similar heart posture: When we trust in the Lord fully and faithfully, walking the way He desires in everything we do (rather than what our own understanding promotes), He makes our paths straight. A "straight path" doesn't mean everything will always be smooth and easy. It means that when we obediently trust and surrender to God's will in everything we do, we walk in God's plan, and His plans are *always* better than following our own understanding.

How are you currently living—by your own understanding or by God's? What needs to change?

Praise God for His good plan for your life. Ask for His help in putting aside your pride and surrendering to His plan, even when it doesn't make sense to you.

DAY 3

Deny Yourself

Read Matthew 16:24–25.

Our culture sends a very clear message: *Do what's best for you*. Living for ourselves is easy; it's natural. But Jesus taught a different standard: *Deny yourself*.

Jesus knows this is challenging, and He never pretended otherwise. He compared this sacrifice to taking up a cross. The visceral effect of this teaching is somewhat lost on us today, but it would have been vivid in the minds of Jesus's first audience. The cross was a horrific symbol of Rome. They didn't invent death by crucifixion, but they perfected it for maximum impact—the ultimate discouragement of rebellion.

For Jesus's first disciples, this would have painted a clear picture of hardship and suffering. When we deny ourselves, we must also accept the reality of hardship. This often feels scary, but you can be certain: God's way is better and worth every struggle.

What are some ways you have denied yourself for Jesus in the past? What are some ways He is calling you to deny yourself now to better follow Him?

Thank Him for the good plan He has for your life. Ask for His help denying yourself and ask that He would show you how to more faithfully follow Him.

DAY 4

Living Selfless

Read Philippians 2:1-5.

Human history is full of people operating out of selfish ambition, always looking out for their own interests, and stepping on the backs of others to get ahead. Yet, Paul was clear: Those priorities are out of order.

God calls us to a higher standard: Instead of thinking of ourselves first, we must think of others. Instead of being selfish, we are called to be humble. Instead of prioritizing our own needs, we are called to “consider others as more important” (v. 3) than ourselves.

When we do this correctly, we’re following Jesus’s teaching that we should love God with all our heart, soul, and mind, and love our neighbors as we love ourselves (Matthew 22:37-39). It should be obvious that we love and follow Jesus by the way we treat others (John 13:35).

This, too, requires surrendering to God’s will for our lives. Jesus obediently surrendered to God’s will completely, was never selfish, and consistently put others before Himself. This attitude of humility led Him to the cross and to our salvation.

How do you think Paul’s teaching here connects to the Great Commission? Why does love for others require sharing about Jesus?

Thank God for the example of Jesus in Scripture. Ask for His help as you seek to live more humbly and obediently like Jesus.

DAY 5

A Living Sacrifice

Read Romans 12:1-2.

What does it mean to be a living sacrifice? In a biblical context, sacrifice means to give up something precious to God.

In today's passage, the precious thing Paul had in mind was our very lives and how we live. This sacrificial living is holy, pleasing to God, and worshipful. When we live sacrificially, we surrender our own desires, instead walking in the way God has called us.

Verse one encourages us to live as a sacrifice to God, and verse two tells us how: Don't live by the world's standards but continuously seek transformation and renewal according to God's will.

When we are tuned in to God through spiritual disciplines like prayer, fasting, and studying God's Word, it transforms us, and we can better discern and walk in God's will.

Consider what it means to be a "living sacrifice." How are you seeking to live sacrificially for God today?

Thank God for His sovereign hand in your life. Ask Him to help you more fully turn your heart toward Him and surrender your life as a living sacrifice to Him.

EXPLORE THE TEXT:

GROUP DISCUSSION

Main Point

We begin with surrender. The vision ahead is not about our fame but God's.

Introduction

Look back on the first page of this week to discuss the intro.

In our reading in Joshua 1 last week, we were introduced to Moses's successor, Joshua. God picked Joshua to lead the Israelite people into the promised land. God also promised that He would go with Joshua and never leave or abandon him. In our passage today, we will continue with Joshua's story, studying his surprising encounter with a man on the road to Jericho.

Have you ever struggled with God in effort to do things your way instead of His way? How did that turn out? What did you learn from this experience?

We studied the beginning of Joshua's leadership of the Israelite people last week (Joshua 1:1-5). What did God promise Joshua? How does this promise extend to God's people today?

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Ask a volunteer to read Joshua 5:13-15.

Do you remember the story of Jericho? If you grew up in church, you might remember learning this account as a child. Maybe you even reenacted it in Sunday school!

Jericho is the first city the Israelites conquered in the book of Joshua. Amazingly, the Israelites conquered the city by marching around it with the ark of the Lord for seven days as the Lord instructed. When they had followed the instructions given to Joshua by the Lord, the wall came tumbling down.

But before we arrive at the tale of the Israelite's victory, we must first recognize Joshua's surrender to God's plan.

Our passage opens with Joshua near the city of Jericho, perhaps performing some additional reconnaissance or planning how they might defeat the city. There he encountered a man with a drawn sword. When Joshua asked if he was a friend or foe, the man answered, "Neither," and revealed his identity as the "commander of the LORD's army" (v. 14).

Some Bible scholars believe this to be the Angel of the Lord, a Christophany—a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus—because of his request for Joshua to remove the sandals from his feet is like the command the Lord gave Moses from the burning bush. Whether or not this was, in fact, the Lord Himself or an angelic commander, the Lord had sent a powerful emissary to meet Joshua on the road.

The commander told Joshua he was neither friend nor foe but of the Lord. What can we learn from this as we consider how we interact with others in a time that is divisive in so many ways?

How might you have sought to categorize people in ways the Lord does not?

How was this meeting further fulfillment of God's promise to Joshua in Joshua 1:1–5?

God not only promised Joshua to go with him and give him victory when the people were obedient, but He also sent help. God still does this for us today! When God calls us to take part in His will and plan for our lives, He not only goes with us, but He also gives us help. This can come in many forms. Sometimes that comes in the form of knowledge (revelation gained from study of Scripture), sometimes as encouragement from a fellow believer, and sometimes as a helper in the mission God has given you.

Note the answer given by the commander of the Lord's army when Joshua asked him if he was for the Israelites or their enemies: "Neither" (v. 14). Joshua's mind and question was limited to a human perspective, but the Lord's emissary was not. He had come in

support of the Lord. The mission and forthcoming victory—and fame and glory that went along with it—belonged to the Lord, not the Israelites. God had a bigger plan in mind. A plan where His people would be blessed and He would be glorified. The eventual victory that was coming over Jericho belonged to the Lord and no one else.

How did Joshua respond to the commander? Why was this important?

How are we called to respond similarly to the Lord today?

Where else in Scripture do you know of where a person responded to God's presence by removing his or her sandals?

What godly leadership did Joshua exhibit in this moment?

Joshua took a very important next step: He surrendered and submitted to the Lord's will. God's plan would defy human logic. No military strategist would recommend to simply walk around the walls of a city to conquer it, but God doesn't need human logic for His plans to succeed. This victory would be achieved by His hands alone. Despite any questions or hesitations he may have had, Joshua surrendered fully, and God's plan unfolded exactly as He said it would.

God desires a similar heart posture from us today. We may not be conquering cities like Joshua, but God has a plan for our lives. Following God's plan glorifies Him and brings us true joy and fulfillment when we are fully obedient. His plan is far better than our own, even when it defies human logic.

To follow God faithfully, we take the same first step as Joshua: Surrender to His plan and will for our lives.

Application

Offer the following action steps for the application of God's word.

Where might God be calling you to surrender right now? How will you respond?

Why is surrender required for followers of Jesus?

Think of someone God has laid on your heart to talk to about Jesus. How can you take steps toward that conversation this week?

Pray

Thank God for going with us and having a good plan for our lives. Pray that God would be glorified through your actions and decisions. Ask for His help as you seek to surrender to His will for your life. Ask that He would show you next steps as you consider those you can share Jesus with.

SEPTEMBER 21

No Shortcuts

JOSHUA 1:6–9

What is one of your favorite “life hacks” or short cuts for every day routines?

As we think about our vision as a church to more widely share the good news with our community, being rooted in the study of God’s Word is so important. And there are no work around or substitutes for time spent in the Word. God uses His Word to speak to us, convicting, encouraging, and guiding us. As we are working to share the gospel with those around us, God will use the truth in His Word to help us know Him better and encourage us as we undertake the mission He has given us. Thankfully, just as He did with Joshua, God goes with us in our calling, too.

THIS WEEK’S MEMORY VERSE

Joshua 1:6–9

“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.”



UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

God's command, "Be strong and courageous," already spoken by Moses to Israel (Dt 31:6), appears three times here (Jos 1:7, 9). The expression is used before great undertakings like David's charge to Solomon to build the temple (1Ch 28:20), King Hezekiah's encouragement to his subjects to withstand the enemy's siege (2Ch 32:7), and Joshua's own charge to Israel to fight (Jos 10:25).

The word *success* (Hb *sakal*; cp. *succeed* in v. 8) is found frequently in the Wisdom literature to describe one's mastery of the world and insight into its challenges ("prudent" in Pr 1:3). The whole instruction (Hb *torah*) describes God's revelation in the form of the previous books of the law of Moses.

Two more references to the instruction affirm the key importance of God's revelation. Study and learning of it are to form so much a part of one's life that the words are fully obeyed as in Dt 6:6–9. The stylistic frame of God's promised presence in Jos 1:5, 9 indicates that Joshua's success will come because God is with him, enabling him to read and observe God's Word (Eph 2:8–10).

This is the third command to be strong and courageous. Moses also commanded the people twice not to be afraid or discouraged (Dt 1:21; 31:8).

Joshua 1:6-9

"Be strong and courageous, for you will distribute the land I swore to their ancestors 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."*

DAILY EXPLORATION

Use this section for your personal Bible study time before you meet with your group.

DAY 1

Rooted in the Word

Read 1:6–9.

In our For the Kingdom series, we have been studying the story of Joshua, Moses's successor. God picked Joshua to lead the people into the promised land. In Joshua's story, we learn that success doesn't come from our own ability, but through God's blessing.

In the reading above, God gave Joshua encouragement and a command on how to move forward—in faith, not fear.

Three times God told Joshua to be strong and courageous. Why would He do that? Because He knew Joshua's tasks would take strength and courage. When God calls us to do things, He knows what it will take to accomplish them. He knows every step we will take . . . every mess up, every victory. He knows how the story will unfold. He chooses us on purpose, and just like He did with Joshua, He aids us as we go. In Joshua's case, as it often is in our own, He knew Joshua would need to choose faith over fear to stay the course.

God also knew how vital His Word would be for Joshua here. God told Joshua to "meditate on it day and night" (v. 8). That is some serious study! The more we study God's Word, the closer we grow to Him and the more we understand what He desires of us. For Joshua, studying God's Word would help him understand what God wanted him to do and keep doing it. Strength and courage are found in this.

Studying God's Word is as important for us today as it was for Joshua. This habit is absolutely worth building. It will transform your life!

How is studying God's Word currently a part of your life?

Thank God for the gift of His Word that has been preserved for generations so we could study it today. Ask for God's help building the habit of studying your Bible daily.

DAY 2

Completely Valuable

Read 2 Timothy 3:16–17.

Studying God’s Word is one of the most important and vital things we can do as believers. While the study of the Word that we do together at church is important, it is the responsibility of every believer to read and study the truth in God’s Word for themselves.

One of the ways that we love the Lord with our minds (Mark 12:30) is by studying His Word. Note what Paul began this thought with here . . . All Scripture. Not some, or the parts that are easiest to understand, or the parts that we don’t think are boring. All Scripture has value for us, and since that is true, we should read it all.

All of the Bible was inspired by God and is useful for us. Paul listed several ways in which it was useful.

Teaching: Scripture is useful for making disciples and helping others learn about Jesus.

Rebuking and Correcting: The Bible helps us understand how we should (and shouldn’t) live as followers of Jesus, and when we are students of the Word, the Holy Spirit can use it to point out sin in our own lives that needs correction—and then help us kick it out of our lives.

Training in Righteousness: The Bible trains us on how to do things rightly, according to God’s will and design.

Correctly utilizing the tool of Scripture God has given us helps us to be complete and equipped for whatever He has in store for us, including sharing the gospel with those He has placed in our lives.

Think through Paul’s list of ways that Scripture is useful. Which of those are you currently making the most of and what areas could you improve in?

Thank God for giving us a guidebook to train us on how to live a righteous life. Ask for His help as you get more serious in your study of His Word.

DAY 3

The Defending Word

Read Matthew 4:4.

Matthew 4:4 gives the words of Jesus, spoken during His temptation in the wilderness. After fasting for forty days and nights, Jesus was hungry! The devil knew Jesus had the power to give into His hunger and turn stones to bread so He could eat, so he laid out that temptation for Jesus. Jesus had the power to fulfill His own needs, but He didn't. He chose to rely on God's provision, even though doing so went against His very real physical need.

Our verse today is Jesus's response to the devil's temptation. In it, Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3.¹ As the Israelite people were tested in the wilderness, so was Jesus—except the Israelites didn't pass the test of obedience, and *Jesus did*. God's will was for Jesus to fast in the wilderness and resist temptation, and *Jesus surrendered to God's will*. He would continue to do this throughout His earthly ministry.

The message here? Obeying God is more important than being well-fed. Obeying God is more important than a great many things: always getting our way, our life working out like we planned, being comfortable . . . the list could go on.

Don't miss what we can learn from Jesus's answer here. He answered temptation with *Scripture*. He knew the right thing to do because He studied God's Word. Likewise, when we study God's Word, the Holy Spirit will teach us the right thing to do and show us how to obey God's plan for our lives.

When is a time you have been obedient to God's plan in your life, even when it went against what you wanted?

Thank God for teaching us how to live and guiding us through life. Ask for His help as you work to fully obey Him.

DAY 4

Purified by the Word

Read Psalm 119:9–16.

Give this passage from Psalm 119 another read. What stands out to you? What do you notice? There is so much goodness contained in these short verses!

It opens with a question: How can we stay on a pure, righteous, and godly path? By living the way God's Word teaches us to.

We have been talking about this idea in our study this week—do you see how it is presented throughout Scripture? God doesn't make us guess how to live! He gives us a guidebook, the Bible, and gives us a Helper, the Holy Spirit, to help us understand how to implement its truth in our life.

Notice how the psalmist wrote of interacting with God's Word in this passage:

I have treasured your word in my heart (v.11). We do this when we internalize God's Word, truly living the way it teaches. We do this when we memorize, making it ready for us in our moment of need, like it was ready for Jesus in our reading yesterday! This act helps lead us away from sin.

I will meditate on your precepts (v.15). We do this when we make time to truly study God's Word. God does such wonderful things with this type of devotion. He teaches us things, reveals truth, helps us know Him more, reveals His will, and shows us how to live. We miss out on all that and more when we don't make this a priority.

Like the psalmist wrote, there is delight in God's Word when we do not forget to study it.

Read this passage again. What is God revealing or showing you as you read it? What stands out?

Praise God for the delight in His Word. Ask for His help as you continue your journey of studying it and making it a priority in your life.

DAY 5

Focus on the Word

Read Deuteronomy 6:4–9.

What important words for us today! The truth and teachings in God's Word are vital, and this passage emphasizes that fact.

Jesus taught the heart behind Deuteronomy 6:5 several times in the Gospels, with an addition: to love the Lord with our minds (Matthew 22:37, Mark 12:30, Luke 10:27). Do you know one of the ways that we do that? We use our minds to study His Word! This helps us know Him more and better.

Just look at the focused study this verse promotes! The original audience here was the Israelites in the wilderness, but this gives us important advice for our lives today too:

Keep God's words in your heart (v.6). We are meant to internalize them and think about them—this should inform the way we live, but that only works when we internalize God's Word.

Repeat it to our children (v.7). Note the word choice of "repeat" here. We shouldn't just teach our kids about God's Word and commands once. We should teach it to them repeatedly.

Talk about it (v.7)! We should talk about the truth we find in God's Word—at home, with our friends, at work, and in our neighborhood. Not only does this make us more familiar with God's Word, it gives us a chance to learn in community. Maybe God taught your friend something you haven't discovered yet! This is also a great way to plant seeds of the gospel. Remember, we are supposed to be Jesus's witnesses (Acts 1:8), and a witness shares what they know!

God has given our church a big vision, and in order to fulfill it, we must be rooted in Scripture.

What does it mean to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength" (v. 5)?

Praise God for the goodness we find in the pages of Scripture. Ask for His help to make it part of everyday life.

EXPLORE THE TEXT:

GROUP DISCUSSION

Main Point

Strength and courage come from trusting and obeying God's Word. To fulfill the vision He has given us, we must be rooted in Scripture.

Introduction

Look back on the first page of this week to discuss the intro.

In our For the Kingdom series, we have been studying the story of Joshua, Moses's successor. God picked Joshua to lead the people into the Promised Land, which was a very large task (not to mention that Joshua had huge shoes to fill)! In Joshua's story, we learn that success doesn't come from our own ability, but through God's blessing as part of His unfolding will.

Today, we are back in Joshua chapter 1 to read the second half of the encouragement God gave Joshua after Moses's death.

How is Scripture reading a part of your daily rhythm?

Why do you think the reading and study of Scripture is important?

How has God used this to bless you in your life?

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Ask a volunteer to read Joshua 1:6-9.

What do you notice in this reading? What details stand out to you?

Why do you think God wanted to specifically encourage Joshua to be strong and courageous? Where do strength and courage come from?

In our reading today, Joshua is a brand-new leader of God's people. He and the Israelites stand on the doorstep of the Promised Land, with a big job ahead of them: they are to conquer the land and occupy it. Years of work lay ahead and our text today shows God encouraging Joshua for the task ahead.

Three times God tells Joshua to be strong and courageous. God had previously given the same encouragement to Moses, and now He offered the same to Joshua. Why would He do that? *Because He knew Joshua's tasks would take strength and courage.* When God calls us to do things, He knows what it will take to accomplish them. He knows every step we will take—every mess up, every victory. He knows how the story will unfold. He chooses us on purpose, and just like He did with Joshua, He aids us as we go.

Don't miss the promise in verse 6. God promised to give this land to His people, and *God always keeps His promises.* He would use imperfect humans like Joshua to accomplish His will regarding the Promised Land.

What does God seem to stress most in this passage? Why do you think that is?

What special instructions does God give Joshua? Why do you think this is important?

Why do you think obedience was so important for Joshua's success?

God promised success when the people observed all the instruction He had given to Moses. He's talking about the law! While they were wandering in the wilderness, they received the law from God. It created order. It helped them remain faithful. It created a way for them to be in relationship with the Creator (how amazing!). Their continued faithfulness was the key to their success.

Verse 8 mentions meditating on God's Word. What do you think that means? How can we practice this daily?

What is the role of God's Word in our lives?

Note God's heavy emphasis on the importance of His Word here. God's Word then was just as important as it is today (and we have much more to learn from now!) Scripture emphasizes this in other places, too, like 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Hebrews 4:12, and Psalm 119:105: *"Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light on my path."* God's Word is meant to help and guide us, to light our way in a dark world.

God told Joshua to "meditate on it day and night" (v.8). That is some serious study! The more we study God's Word, the closer we grow to Him and the more we understand what He desires of us. **This is a habit that is absolutely worth working to build—it will transform your life.**

God even tells Joshua why it is important for him: reading His Word would help Joshua follow what it says to do, and when he does that, as he is walking faithfully in the Lord's will, he would prosper and succeed. This would also help give Joshua strength and courage. We experience fear and are discouraged less as we know and walk with our Savior more closely.

Application

Offer the following action steps for the application of God's word.

What does this passage teach us about God? What can we learn about Him here?

What can we do as a class to study God's Word more intentionally?

Has anyone successfully built the habit of consistently reading God's Word? What tips can you share with the group?

Pray

Thank God for the power and truth in His Word. Thank Him for making it so accessible to us today and ask for His help as you work to become more serious about your study of it. Lift up the people God has placed in your life and ask Him to show you who He desires for you to share the gospel with.

SEPTEMBER 28

People Are Waiting

JOSHUA 2:1-24

When was a time in your life you felt “the stars aligned”? What do you usually attribute these moments to?

Most of us have had moments where it felt like everything aligned to work out perfectly in a moment. As believers, we remember that God has complete power and control over our lives and He is always working ahead of us for His purposes. Today, we will see an instance where God was working ahead of His people in ways they could never have imagined.

THIS WEEK’S MEMORY VERSE

Joshua 2:12a

“Now please swear to me by the Lord that you will also show kindness to my father’s family, because I showed kindness to you.”



UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Joshua dispatched two spies to discover the strength of Jericho. The city was strategically located at the pass leading from the Jordan Valley to the central highlands. The spies entered the house of the prostitute Rahab, who concealed their presence from the king of Jericho.

The story's events confirmed to the spies that Israel's enemies were weak in spite of their towering walls. Jericho's foolish king was easily tricked by the lowly harlot Rahab, whereas the Hebrew spies were clever when they entered into an oath with her. Also the spies learned that the city's population was terrified of Israel. Another assurance of Israel's ultimate victory was Rahab's conversion and admission that the Lord had given the land into their hands.

Rahab showed her faith in God's promises by helping the spies escape. She tied a scarlet thread to her window that signaled her salvation. Rahab's faith in God and her action in behalf of the spies became a model for Christian faith and works (Heb. 11:31; Jas. 2:25).

Joshua 2:1,8-14,22-24

Joshua son of Nun secretly sent two men as spies from the Acacia Grove, saying, "Go and scout the land, especially Jericho." So they left, and they came to the house of a prostitute named Rahab, and stayed there.

8 Before the men fell asleep, she went up on the roof **9** and said to them, "I know that the Lord has given you this land and that the terror of you has fallen on us, and everyone who lives in the land is panicking because of you., **10** For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two Amorite kings you completely destroyed across the Jordan. **11** When we heard this, we lost heart, and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the Lord your God is God in heaven above and on earth below. **12** Now please swear to me by the Lord that you will also show kindness to my father's family, because I showed kindness to you. Give me a sure sign **13** that you will spare the lives of my father, mother, brothers, sisters, and all who belong to them, and save us from death."

14 The men answered her, "We will give our lives for yours. If you don't report our mission, we will show kindness and faithfulness to you when the Lord gives us the land."

22 So the two men went into the hill country and stayed there three days until the pursuers had returned. They searched all along the way, but did not find them. **23** Then the men returned, came down from the hill country, and crossed the Jordan. They went to Joshua son of Nun and reported everything that had happened to them. **24** They told Joshua, "The Lord has handed over the entire land to us. Everyone who lives in the land is also panicking because of us."

DAILY EXPLORATION

Use this section for your personal Bible study time before you meet with your group.

DAY 1

Perfectly in Place

Read Joshua 2:8–13.

Have you ever heard the phrase *mise en place*? It's a French term that means, "everything in its place." The idea is when you begin cooking, everything is already ready to go—prechopped, premeasured, and gathered, ready to be cooked.

God works this way in our lives too. Just like someone does the advance work of getting everything set up for a TV chef to cook, God prepares the way for us in advance, softening hearts, and laying the foundation for the work He wants us to do.

In our passage today, we see a time when God did just this for the Israelite people. Before God's people had even set foot in the promised land, God had gone before them to prepare the way in an unlikely place. Since God brought His people out of slavery in Egypt, His reputation had been building, and the people of Jericho knew of His power and were afraid.

This healthy fear of the Lord led a very unlikely ally, the prostitute Rahab, to aid the Israelite spies. God had gone before them, laying the groundwork for Rahab to protect them. God does this for us too.

God may not knock down literal city walls before us, but He certainly knocks down walls of opposition and walls in the hearts of those He wants us to pursue. Even now, God is working, knocking down walls for the faith conversations you will have with those He has placed in your life. People are waiting, and God is busy working ahead of us.

How have you seen God prepare the way for His work in your life?

Thank God for going before us, paving the way for His will to play out in our lives. Praise Him for the walls He is breaking down in the hearts of those He wants you to speak to. Ask for His help as you continue to walk forward in faith, telling others about Him.

DAY 2

Prepared in Advance

Read Luke 10:1-6.

Have you ever taken a trip without planning or packing? No bags or money, no hotel reservation? Just the thought is nerve-wracking, right? This is, essentially, what Jesus instructed in this passage.

Mark 6:7 records a similar passage where Jesus sent His twelve disciples out, on mission, with authority, for the gospel (a small training ground for the ministry they would one day undertake). In today's passage in Luke, Jesus sent 72 others on a similar mission. They were sent out without money or items someone in that day would normally travel with, healing and proclaiming the good news. They were sent to towns where Jesus Himself would go, but while they were physically ahead of the incarnate Jesus, we can trust that God paved the way for them, laying the foundations for the experiences they would have and the lessons they would learn.

Do you notice what Jesus said in verse 2? "The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few." We get the sense that the 72 Jesus was sending was not enough because He instructed them to pray for the Lord to send more workers into the field.

This is still true today. The spiritual harvest is ripe. There are thousands of people in our country searching, trying to find satisfaction in places where there is none. God is paving the way for so many people to hear the gospel, and *He calls us to be workers harvesting in His field*. He is there now, working ahead of us, it's our job to walk forward in faith and obedience.

How might the people in your life and community be an abundant harvest, ready to hear the good news?

Thank God for paving the way for people who do not know Him to receive the good news. Ask for His help as you walk forward in faith and obedience into the harvest He has prepared for you to work.

DAY 3

God Is Ahead of Us

Read Acts 10:17–20.

What an amazing story of God paving the way ahead of His people! At the beginning of Acts 10, Luke introduced a God-fearing Roman centurion named Cornelius. In a vision, an angel of God told him to send men to Simon the tanner's house to fetch Peter.

As Cornelius's men were traveling there, Peter, too, saw a vision. In it, God had a message for him: "What God has made clean, do not call impure" (v. 15). The vision included animals unclean by Jewish dietary standards, yet the bigger picture wasn't about food, but people. Salvation wasn't just for the Jews, but also for Gentiles like Cornelius.

As Peter was trying to understand what the vision meant, God's plan unfolded as Cornelius's men arrived asking for Peter. Then, the Spirit confirmed He had sent the men and told Peter to go with them. God wasn't just aligning schedules; He was also preparing hearts. When Peter went to Cornelius's house, he shared the good news and Cornelius's household was baptized and received the Holy Spirit.

God's hand at work is so evident in this passage. He pre-ordained how every detail would unfold. As a result, God was glorified, and the gospel was spread. When He works ahead of His people, He has a divine purpose. When we are obedient as the Holy Spirit nudges us (like Cornelius and Peter were), God will work similarly in our lives!

**Has the Holy Spirit ever nudged you to do something?
What happened?**

Thank God for working out all the details for His goals to be achieved. Ask for His help as you work to follow His guidance obediently.

DAY 4

The Right Words

Read Mark 13:9–11.

Have you ever read from a teleprompter? TV anchors use a teleprompter to deliver the news live on air. It scrolls through exactly what they need to say, so they don't miss (or misrepresent) any details. In our passage today, Jesus was speaking about a similar effect the Holy Spirit has, except, where a teleprompter requires advance preparation, the Holy Spirit requires none! He can feed us what we need to say in the moment.

In this passage, Jesus prepared His disciples for what they would face for the sake of the gospel. They would face opposition and punishment for Jesus's name, all for the sake of the good news being proclaimed to all nations. When they were brought before various leaders and questioned for their gospel work, they didn't have to worry about what they would say. The Holy Spirit would take care of it. We see this in action in the Holy Spirit-filled sermons delivered throughout the book of Acts.

And the Holy Spirit still works in this way. He can give us the words to say in situations where we are unsure, and even when we feel we haven't communicated well, the Holy Spirit can still work. As we think about sharing the gospel with people in our lives and community, we don't have to worry. Let the Holy Spirit guide you and give you the words to say.

When you think about sharing the gospel with people who don't know Jesus, how anxious does that make you? How does this passage encourage you?

Thank God for giving us the words to say when we need them. Ask for courage and help as you obediently share the good news with those God has placed in your life. Think of someone you think God wants you to share the gospel with and pray for them specifically.

DAY 5

Ready for the Message

Read Acts 2:37–41.

This passage comes on the heels of one of the Holy Spirit-filled sermons we referenced yesterday. The Holy Spirit had just come down on the believers at Pentecost (Acts 2:1–4), and when He did, Peter delivered a powerful sermon that resulted in about 3,000 people being saved. Here's the thing, there are no magic human words that deliver these kinds of results for the gospel. The "deep conviction" Luke wrote about in verse 37 only comes through the work of the Holy Spirit, and in our passage today, the Lord had prepared the way for the growth of the church by opening 3,000 hearts to be receptive to the good news Peter brought.

In fact, God had been preparing for this moment in even bigger ways. He had perfectly timed the arrival of the promised "Helper" (John 15:26), the Holy Spirit, with a time when many Jews were in Jerusalem, ready to receive the good news.

Have you seen God's divine timing play out in your own life? Maybe you happened to meet someone at just the right time, or your circumstances perfectly lined up for a life event. God is ahead of us, working things out for His plan, and we can trust that as we take on our bold goal to share the gospel with 5,000 people, He is working ahead of us now, preparing hearts for the message He wants them to receive.

Think about one person God might want you to share the gospel with. Reflect on ways that you might connect with them and begin telling them about Jesus.

Thank God for sending His Holy Spirit to aid you as you walk faithfully in His will. Pray specifically for the person you identified above. Ask that God would prepare their heart as receptive ground to receive the good news.

EXPLORE THE TEXT:

GROUP DISCUSSION

Main Point

Rahab shows that God is already at work ahead of us. People are waiting.

Introduction

Look back on the first page of this week to discuss the intro.

In our For the Kingdom series, we've been studying Joshua and what we can learn from his life and story. We have discussed how God helps us accomplish the things He calls us to do, how God encouraged Joshua, and how Joshua surrendered to the Lord's plan for His people to occupy the promised land.

Today we will read about God's provision. Before the Israelites had even set foot in the promised land, God had gone before them to prepare the way in an unlikely place.

What does it mean for God to "go before us?"

How do we see God prepare the way for His people in the Bible?

Do you think this is still something God does today? Why or why not?

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Ask a volunteer to read Joshua 2:1-24.

What details do you notice as you read this passage? What stands out to you as important or interesting?

How do you see God working in this passage?

Just as Moses sent spies to the promised land in Numbers, Joshua sent spies to scout the land in our reading today, but with a much different result. Where most of Moses's spies had returned with fear, Joshua's spies returned with faith: "They told Joshua, 'The Lord has handed over the entire land to us. Everyone who lives in the land is also panicking because of us.'" (v. 24)

How could they have such faith in such a daunting situation? *They recognized God's provision. God had gone before them to prepare the way.* God prepares the way for us when He aligns people, situations, interactions, and inclinations with His purposes. Sometimes God paves a favorable road for us walk, where doors open surprisingly. Sometimes He closes doors, so we are led to another path as part of His plan.

In what ways did God prepare the way for His people in advance?

What role did Rahab play in executing God's plan here? Why is this significant?

What does Rahab's response beginning in verse 8 tell us about God and His provision for His people?

God's plan that had been set in motion in Egypt paved the way for the preservation of the Israelite spies in today's passage. Throughout the Exodus story, every miraculous act was so "the Egyptians will know that I am Yahweh" (Exodus 7:5). The Egyptians learned this truth the hard way, but Rahab demonstrated remarkable faith and understanding. She knew of God's victory during the Exodus, and the victory He had brought about since, and she believed that God would hand their land over to His people. Her faith in God's ability to execute His plan led her to put herself at great risk to preserve the Israelite spies.

What can we learn from the great risk Rahab took to hide the Israelite spies? How does this point to God's provision for His people?

Why is the spies' response in verse 24 significant? How do you think they reached this conclusion?

How amazing that God used "a prostitute named Rahab" (v. 1) to preserve His spies and play such a pivotal role in this story. Rahab's faith is praised in the New Testament (Hebrews 11:31), and after she and her family were preserved in the fall of Jericho, she gave birth to a son, Boaz, one of the men in Jesus's own family lineage. *God delights in using the unlikely as part of His plan.*

Today's passage is just one of many stories in Scripture of God preparing the way for His people. Just as God worked ahead of the Israelites in Jericho by putting fear into the hearts of the people through His mighty acts, God works ahead of us today as we faithfully execute His plans for our lives.

God may not knock down literal city walls before us, but He certainly knocks down walls of opposition and walls in the hearts of those He wants us to speak to. God doesn't always knock down the walls we expect or think that He should, but we can trust that every unexpected circumstance we encounter happens for a reason.

Just like God used the unlikely prostitute Rahab in Jericho, God will use us, even when we feel like we aren't the best choice, when we step forward in God's plan in faith. Even now, God is working, knocking down walls for the faith conversations you will have with those He has placed in your life. People are waiting, and God is busy working ahead of us.

Application

Offer the following action steps for the application of God's word.

How have you seen God prepare the way for His work in your own life?

How does the truth that God is working ahead of you make you feel about our church's mission to share the gospel with 5,000 people?

What does Rahab's story teach us about the kind of people God uses to achieve His purposes?

Pray

Thank God for going before us, paving the way for His will to play out in our lives. Praise Him for the walls He is breaking down in the hearts of those He wants you to tell about Him. Ask for His help as you continue to walk forward in faith, telling others about Him.

OCTOBER 5

Do It Again

JOSHUA 3:1-17

What do it mean to “catch lightning in a bottle”? Why are these moments rare?

To “catch lightning in a bottle” means accomplishing a rare and difficult feat or capturing an unlikely moment. The Israelites might have felt this is what had happened in the past with God. God had worked miraculously for their ancestors, but did they have hope to see Him work in this way again? Today’s passage reminds us that God’s past work is not just a cause for nostalgic awe but a reason for confidence that God, who does not change, will continue to work in significant ways for His people.

THIS WEEK’S MEMORY VERSE

Joshua 3:5

Joshua told the people, “Consecrate yourselves, because the Lord will do wonders among you tomorrow.”



UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

Joshua ordered the people to prepare for crossing by sanctifying themselves. The priests carrying the ark of the covenant led the procession. The ark symbolized the presence of God. It commonly rested in the tabernacle's holy of holies where the glory of God appeared (see Exod. 25:1–22; see the feature article “Tabernacle”).

When the Levites who bore the ark entered the river, the waters stopped flowing at Adam (Tell ed-Damiyeh) near Zarethan. The extraordinary nature of the crossing is emphasized by the author, who explained that the river flooded its banks at that time of year. Yet Israel crossed the river bed on “dry” land.

The miraculous crossing magnified Joshua's leadership because it paralleled Moses' leadership at the Red Sea (4:14). The crossing also proved that the Lord was alive and would drive out Israel's enemies.

Joshua 3:1-17

Joshua started early the next morning and left the Acacia Grove with all the Israelites. They went as far as the Jordan and stayed there before crossing. **2** After three days the officers went through the camp **3** and commanded the people, "When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God carried by the Levitical priests, you are to break camp and follow it. **4** But keep a distance of about a thousand yards between yourselves and the ark. Don't go near it, so that you can see the way to go, for you haven't traveled this way before."

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."

9 Then Joshua told the Israelites, "Come closer and listen to the words of the Lord your God." **10** He said, "You will know that the living God is among you and that he will certainly dispossess before you the Canaanites, Hethites, Hivites, Perizzites, Girgashites, Amorites, and Jebusites **11** when the ark of the covenant of the Lord of the whole earth goes ahead of you into the Jordan. **12** Now choose twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one man for each tribe. **13** When the feet of the priests who carry the ark of the Lord, the Lord of the whole earth, come to rest in the Jordan's water, its water will be cut off. The water flowing downstream will stand up in a mass."

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.

DAILY EXPLORATION

Use this section for your personal Bible study time before you meet with your group.

DAY 1

Stepping Out

Read Joshua 3:14–17.

When have you done something new and scary? This is where the priests found themselves in this moment, carrying the ark of the covenant and entering the water of the Jordan River at flood stage (certainly a risky move by human standards!). God had promised to be with them, and even to do wonders among them that day (as He had done many times before), but that probably didn't make that first step into the rushing river any easier. He had parted the water of the Red Sea so their parents and grandparents could cross on dry ground, but what would He do for them?

As soon as their feet touched the water, *God caused it to stand still downstream (vv. 15–16)*, and all the people of Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground in the presence of God. This miracle sent a message to the people that wouldn't have been missed: *God was faithful to His people before, and He will be faithful to His people again.*

Sometimes, when God calls us to do new things, they are risky. Sometimes money, reputation, or relationships are on the line. Sometimes we must act on a gut feeling that God wants us to do something, but we don't get to see the full picture until later. Even in the risky and unknown, though, we can trust that God goes with us. As many generations before us witnessed: He was faithful before, and He will be faithful again.

How does the truth that God was faithful before and He will be faithful again encourage you as you think about sharing your faith with others in your community?

Thank God for His faithfulness. Ask Him to help you trust Him as you walk forward faithfully on the path He has for you.

DAY 2

Remember God's Promises

Read Deuteronomy 6:10–14.

Much of Moses's ministry was marked by reminding (or, perhaps more accurately, begging) the people to be obedient. Deuteronomy, which contains a record of Moses's final instructions to the Israelite people before his death, is a call to be faithful, a retelling of God's past faithfulness to His people, and a reminder of how God had told them to live.

Moses spoke of the future faithfulness they could expect from the Lord: "*When the LORD your God brings you into the land*" (v. 10, emphasis added). God made them a promise, and even though Moses wouldn't be there to personally see it, He knew God would fulfill it. Every statement here speaks to the immense blessing of God's faithfulness . . . God would fulfill His promise and take them into the land He had prepared (the cities and houses and cisterns and vineyards and olive groves were all there, full and waiting for them, as God had planned and promised).

God was faithful before and He would be faithful again. Moses stressed the message, *don't forget how God was faithful to you before*. This is something the Israelite people struggled with. God faithfully fulfilled His promise to bring them out of Egypt, but the wilderness was littered with stories of their inability to trust that God would continue to take care of them.

This is a cautionary tale for us. God has been faithful before in our lives, and He will be faithful again. *Don't forget.*

Have you ever experienced doubt that God would take care of you? Where do you turn in these moments?

Thank God for all the evidence of His faithfulness to His people in the pages of Scripture. Ask Him to help you remember His faithfulness the next time you doubt or fear He might not take care of you.

DAY 3

In Crisis

Read Psalm 77:10–12.

We have all had a crisis of some kind in our lives. Human life is often marked by devastating diagnoses, unimaginable tragedy, financial and job-related hardships, and difficult circumstances we must wade through.

Have you ever felt like the psalmist in verse 10—grieved at God because of the way things worked out? God is unchanging, so the psalmist here was not saying that God changed, but rather that the way he was expecting God to work was different than expected.¹ So many of us have been there. On a different path than where we wanted to be, mourning what we thought should have been.

The psalmist offered a beautiful solution for moments like this: remember God's past faithfulness. It is easy to get caught up in the emotions of an uncertain time, but don't forget what God has done before. We have a whole Bible filled with God's acts of ancient wonders, and a life filled with personal stories of the way God has shown up for us. Remember what God has done. Reflect on His past faithfulness and walk forward in confidence, knowing that He was faithful before, and He will be faithful again (even if in a time of crisis).

Reflect on how God has been faithful in your life. What has this taught you?

Thank God for walking with us, and being faithful, even in times of crisis. Praise Him for all the ways He has been faithful in your life and thank Him for the promise that He will walk with you always.

DAY 4

Faithful When We Are Not

Read Psalm 85:6-7.

Yesterday, we read from a psalm written to comfort and give confidence in a time of crisis. When the psalmist was in a moment of crisis, he reflected on God's past faithfulness, meditating on God's actions for the good of His people.

Today's psalmist was in a crisis, too. He found himself out of favor with God because of past sin. He started the psalm with the very thing the last psalmist wrote about: reflecting on God's past faithfulness. "LORD, you showed favor to your land; you restored the fortunes of Jacob" (v. 1). When the people repented of their sin, God was faithful and turned from His anger.

Even in moments where God feels far away (*He isn't, He is always with us, but sometimes it can feel this way*), when we feel like we've messed up like the psalmist implied he had, God's past faithfulness gives us hope that He will be faithful again.

**How do you think God shows His faithful love (v. 7)?
What has that looked like in your life?**

Thank God for His faithful love to us, even when we mess up and don't deserve it. Pray and ask God to prepare you for the role He wants you to play in sharing the gospel in your community.

DAY 5

Will He Do It Again?

Read Habakkuk 3:2.

Habakkuk struggled with a question many of us can relate to: *Why did God allow this to happen?*

Many things might drive us to this question . . . loss, hardship, sickness, or misfortune. Habakkuk prophesied that God would punish Judah's sin by sending a Babylonian invasion (Habakkuk 1:5-11), and he struggled with the idea. How could God use a wicked nation to punish His people (who might be wicked, but were less wicked than Babylon)?² God didn't necessarily give Habakkuk the answers he was looking for, but He did call him to faith (2:4b). Habakkuk eventually decided to praise God no matter the circumstances (3:17-19). In our passage today, Habakkuk was in awe of what God had done, and he asked God to do it again.

What an example Habakkuk gives us! We should live by faith. We should worship and praise God even when things aren't going our way, even when we think things don't make sense or are unfair. Remember your awe at the good works His hands have brought in the past and have faith that He will do it again.

When we spread the good news in our communities, things won't always go our way. People will reject our message. We will mess up. Through whatever hardships we face, though, we can trust that God will faithfully go with us to carry out the mission He has given us (and we'll be glad we stuck with it).

When was a time you questioned God? Why can we trust Him in times of uncertainty?

Thank God for remaining faithful to us and being a safe place for questions. Ask for His help as you continue to share the good news. Pray specifically for anyone He may have laid on your heart to reach out to this week.

EXPLORE THE TEXT:

GROUP DISCUSSION

Main Point

Just like with Joshua, God has been faithful to us in the past, and we can trust that He will be faithful again.

Introduction

Look back on the first page of this week to discuss the intro.

In our For the Kingdom series, we've been talking about our goal as a church to see 5,000 people come to know Christ by 2035. This is a goal we can't accomplish alone. God goes with us, and we can trust that He will faithfully help us as we commit to this important kingdom work. He was faithful before, and He will be faithful again.

In our reading today, we'll read the story of Joshua leading the Israelite people to cross the Jordan River. During this miracle, God gave them a reminder of His past faithfulness, and Joshua assured the people that the Lord would go with them into the promised land.

What are some things that you can always count on?

What does it mean for God to be faithful?

When you think of God's faithfulness as recorded in the Bible, what do you think of?

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Ask a volunteer to read Joshua 3:1-17.

What details stand out to you in this passage? Why?

Where was God leading His people? Why was this significant?

Scripture is full of stories of God's faithfulness to His people, and the crossing of the Jordan is a notable example. At this time, the Israelites were exiting the wilderness where they had wandered for forty years and were on the cusp of entering the promised land to claim that which God had promised to give them.

Note that they were going somewhere new. The text phrases it this way: *"For you haven't traveled this way before."* (v. 4) The people were embarking on a journey into the unknown. This would be so different from the reality of their everyday life in the wilderness.

The Lord encouraged them in this moment: "Joshua told the people, 'Consecrate yourselves, because the LORD will do wonders among you tomorrow'" (v. 5). The physical presence of the Lord (in the form of the ark of the covenant) would go before them as they crossed the Jordan, and God reassured them through Joshua that He would be among them as they set about their task to occupy the promised land (v. 10). God promised to go with them wherever they went, and He would make good on that promise.

God still works this way. He has promised to go with us (the Holy Spirit dwells inside all believers), and even when we are going places we have never been, entering into new experiences, *He goes with us.*

Why do you think it was important for the people to consecrate themselves (v. 5)?

Joshua instructed the people to consecrate themselves. In Joshua's day, this meant physical purification. This consecration paved the way for God to do wonders among them as they crossed the Jordan River. Today, we aren't required to physically consecrate ourselves anymore, but we perform a similar act in our hearts when we get serious about living righteously, kicking sin out of our lives, and drawing near to God. God can work in and through us in any state, but we are more ready and effective vessels for His good works as we are seeking to be more Christ-like.

Imagine being a priest carrying the ark in this moment. The Jordan was at flood stage (v. 15) and walking into a rushing river (much less carrying a burden like the ark) was risky, but as soon as their feet touched the water, *God caused it to stand still downstream* (vv. 15-16).

Sometimes, God calls us to do new things that are risky. Sometimes money, reputation, or relationships are on the line. Sometimes we must act on a gut feeling that God wants us to obey and we don't get to see the fuller picture until we dip our toes into the water God has called us to pass through. Even in the risky and unknown, we can trust that God goes with us.

How does God's past faithfulness give us confidence in His future faithfulness?

Think about the nature of the miracle of the stopping of flowing water so the Israelite people could cross. What did this show the people, and why might this be particularly comforting?

Consecrated and encouraged, *all the people of Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground in the presence of God*. Does this miracle sound familiar? Some forty years earlier, God performed a similar miracle at the Red Sea, fulfilling His promise to bring His people out of Egypt by parting the water so they could cross on dry ground. The Israelites crossing the Jordan were a different generation than those who crossed the Red Sea, an event they were sure to have heard tales of in their time in the wilderness. This miracle, another divinely ordained crossing of a body of water (and another fulfilled promise), sent a message to the people that wouldn't have been missed: *God was faithful to His people before, and He will be faithful to His people again*.

When was a time you have seen God work in a way that helped build your faith?

How did the events in this passage strengthen not only the faith of those present, but also all of God's people who have come after them?

Application

Offer the following action steps for the application of God's word.

What does this passage teach us about God and His faithfulness?

Why is it important to share stories of God's faithfulness with one another regularly?

How does the confidence of God's ongoing faithfulness lead us to tell others about Him?

Pray

Thank God for His ongoing faithfulness. Thank Him for the ways that He shows He is with us, even when we are doing new or nerve-wracking things. Ask for His strengthening and encouragement as our church embarks on the journey of seeking to share the good news with 5,000 people in the next ten years.

OCTOBER 12

Remember the Faithfulness

JOSHUA 4:1-24

**What are some ways you have seen God work in your life?
How does that affect your trust in God to work in the present
and future?**

When we talk about “sharing our faith,” it can sometimes feel hard or scary, but there are no “right” or magic words for this act of faithfulness. An easy way to get started is simply by sharing how God has shown up and been faithful to take care of you in the past. It doesn’t have to be fancy or formal. A simple invitation can go a long way: “Can I share with you why I believe in Jesus? I’m not sure I’ve ever told you before.” Your firsthand testimony glorifies God, and just like the miracles God wrought for the Israelite people, it helps people get to know God’s goodness.

THIS WEEK’S MEMORY VERSE

Joshua 4:23-24

“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 strong, and so that you may always fear the LORD your God.”



UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

The Israelites erected a monument to commemorate their crossing. It was built of twelve stones, representing the twelve tribes of Israel. The stones were taken from the river where the Levites bearing the ark had stood. When future generations asked, “What do these stones mean?” the monument served to remind them of the miraculous crossing. Because of this miracle Joshua was exalted in the eyes of the people. Another purpose of the miracle was that all nations might recognize the power of God.

Joshua 4:1-9

After the entire nation had finished crossing the Jordan, the Lord spoke to Joshua: **2** "Choose twelve men from the people, one man for each tribe, **3** and command them: Take twelve stones from this place in the middle of the Jordan where the priests are standing, carry them with you, and set them down at the place where you spend the night."

4 So Joshua summoned the twelve men he had selected from the Israelites, one man for each tribe, **5** and said to them, "Go across to the ark of the Lord your God in the middle of the Jordan. Each of you lift a stone onto his shoulder, one for each of the Israelite tribes, **6** so that this will be a sign among you. In the future, when your children ask you, 'What do these stones mean to you?' **7** you should tell them, 'The water of the Jordan was cut off in front of the ark of the Lord's covenant. When it crossed the Jordan, the Jordan's water was cut off.' Therefore these stones will always be a memorial for the Israelites."

8 The Israelites did just as Joshua had commanded them. The twelve men took stones from the middle of the Jordan, one for each of the Israelite tribes, just as the Lord had told Joshua. They carried them to the camp and set them down there. **9** Joshua also set up twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan where the priests who carried the ark of the covenant were standing. The stones are still there today.

DAILY EXPLORATION

Use this section for your personal Bible study time before you meet with your group.

DAY 1

Remember the Miracle

Read Joshua 4:8–9.

God brought His people out of the wilderness the same way He brought them into it: with a miracle. With the ark of the covenant standing sentry, “the entire nation” (Joshua 4:1) of Israel crossed through the flooded Jordan River on dry ground. God had been faithful to carry His people out of slavery in Egypt by parting the Red Sea, and God had been faithful again, parting another body of water to bring the Israelites into the promised land. This act of faithfulness is one God wanted His people to remember, so He instructed them to take twelve stones from the Jordan (one for each tribe) and build a monument with them as a testament to God’s faithfulness.

Do you have any “monuments” like this in your life? How has God been faithful to you before, and how do you remember those times now? God’s faithfulness builds a testimony in us that helps us remember He has been faithful before and will be faithful again. When God brought His people out of Egypt, they quickly forgot His faithfulness and lost faith that He would continue to provide for them. This is human nature. We need the reminder of God’s faithfulness just as much as the Israelites did. Just like generations of God’s people before us, we are sometimes quick to forget how God helped us in the past when we are faced with dire circumstances, but we can take heart in this truth: God never fails. God was faithful before and He’ll be faithful again.

Reflect on a time in your past when God was faithful to you. How do you remember this and how does it give you hope for the future?

Thank God for the ways He has shown up for you in the past. Ask Him to show you how and when He wants you to share His past faithfulness with those who don’t know Him yet.

DAY 2

Sharing What God Has Done

Read Joshua 4:19–24.

Yesterday we talked about God instructing His people to build a monument to remember His faithfulness to carry them into the promised land. Today's reading records the building of that monument and Joshua's speech after.

Note what Joshua reiterated here: sharing the story of God's faithfulness (vv. 21–22). God was faithful, and they weren't to keep the story to themselves; they were to share it with future generations. When God works powerfully in our lives, it brings Him glory and points to His goodness. These stories not only remind us to fear the Lord (respecting and honoring God by walking faithfully with Him and being obedient to His commands), but they can also help people come to know Him!

When we talk about "sharing our faith," it can sometimes feel hard or scary, but there are no "right" or magic words for this act of faithfulness. An easy way to get started is simply sharing how God has shown up and been faithful to take care of you in the past. It doesn't have to be fancy or formal. A simple invitation can go a long way. Your firsthand testimony glorifies God and helps people begin to learn God's goodness.

What is one story of God's past faithfulness you could share with someone in the next week? Who is God putting on your heart to share with?

Thank God for the many ways He has been faithful to you, and His people, in the past. Ask that He would show you the story He wants you to share and put someone on your heart to share it with. Ask for His help as you have this conversation.

DAY 3

God's Faithfulness to His People

Read Psalm 105:1-6.

When we scan through the biblical record, we find evidence of God's faithfulness again and again. God faithfully delivered Abraham's promised son (Genesis 21:1-3). God faithfully remained with Joseph when he was shipped off to Egypt (Genesis 39:2-3). God faithfully delivered His people out of slavery in Egypt (Exodus 12:51), just like He promised Abraham He would (Genesis 15:13-14). God faithfully brought His people into the promised land (Joshua 4:1). This doesn't even scratch the surface. God has been faithful throughout generations. God has been faithful even when His people were faithless.

This week, we are reflecting on the "wondrous works" God has done in our own lives. God has given us so many reasons to give thanks, so many wonders to remember.

Note what this psalm recommends: "Tell about all his wondrous works" (v. 2). There is a call to praise but also a call to tell. Part of the way we praise God is by telling others about the wondrous things He has done for us. We remember and honor what He has done for us by telling.

Write a prayer of thanks and praise to God for all the ways He has worked in your life.

Praise God for the wondrous works He has done in your life. Praise Him for showing up even when we mess up and aren't faithful. Thank Him for choosing to be in a relationship with you. Ask for His help as you share Him with those He has placed in your life.

DAY 4

Past, Present, and Future

Read Nehemiah 9:16–17.

In Joshua 4, God instructed the people to make a monument to help them remember His faithfulness to them. He did that because He knew the people would be prone to wander away from Him. So, He made laws and guidelines and had them make monuments to keep their hearts turned toward Him, but they strayed anyway. The Old Testament is a roller coaster ride of various levels of obedience (and disobedience). Eventually, the people's disobedience got so bad that they were sent into exile for a time. Nehemiah helped rebuild the walls of a conquered Jerusalem after this exile ended.

This week, we are talking about the importance of God's past faithfulness in our lives. This passage in Nehemiah confesses how the people acted arrogantly and turned away from God. They forgot God's faithfulness and turned their hearts from Him. But even in their unfaithfulness, God's goodness is still apparent. When they turned back to Him, God forgave them and extended grace and compassion. God is "slow to anger and abounding in faithful love" (v. 17).

The unfaithfulness of God's people in the Old Testament is a cautionary tale for us. It's easy to turn astray, to choose to do what seems right and good to us instead of doing what God says is right and good. Remembering God's faithfulness helps us fix our eyes on Him even when it is hard. God was faithful before, and He will be faithful again.

Reflect on some ways God has been faithful to your family or community. How does this give you hope for the future?

Praise God for being "slow to anger and abounding in faithful love" (v. 17), even though we don't deserve it. Ask Him for help remembering His past faithfulness and keeping our hearts turned toward Him.

DAY 5

Heard by God

Read 1 Samuel 7:9–12.

Today, we remember victories and important events in many ways. Monuments and trophy rooms help us remember where we came from. This week, we've read some ways God's people remembered where they came from in Scripture, and when they looked back (which they didn't always), there was one constant: God's faithfulness.

In Joshua 4, God instructed the people to carry twelve rocks from the Jordan River and set them up as a monument to His faithfulness to allow them to cross the Jordan and into the promised land. In today's reading, we see how the prophet Samuel set up a similar monument to honor and remember God for helping His people.

Samuel cried out to God for help and "the LORD answered him." (v. 9) Just like God heard Samuel when he cried out for help with the approaching Philistines, God hears our prayers when we cry out to Him.

Have you ever cried out to God? How has He heard your prayers? How has He answered? Don't forget those moments. Like Samuel, remember and honor how God has shown up to provide for you. Tell people about these moments. Be public about it.

As we think about our bold vision to seek 5,000 people coming to know Christ by 2035, remember the testimony that God has built up in you through His past faithfulness. Sharing the stories of how He has shown up in your life is such an easy way to open the door for people to get to know Him and ultimately receive the gospel.

Reflect on a time in the past that you cried out to God and He answered you. What happened?

Praise God for hearing your prayers. Thank Him for listening when you cry to Him and ask for His help remembering the moments He has been faithful to you.

EXPLORE THE TEXT:

GROUP DISCUSSION

Main Point

Like Joshua and the Israelites after they crossed the Jordan River on dry ground, God calls us to mark the moments of His faithfulness. We remember so we can tell future generations.

Introduction

Look back on the first page of this week to discuss the intro.

In our For the Kingdom series, we've been studying Joshua and preparing for the bold vision God has given us: to see 5,000 people come to know Christ by 2035. Joshua's life was characterized by many moments where he had to step out in faith, like we are being called to now. Last week, we read about the Israelite people's miraculous crossing of the Jordan River, and this week, we'll see how they memorialized God's faithfulness.

How does our culture memorialize and honor important events today?

Why do you think it's important to remember and honor past moments when God was faithful to us?

What are some ways God's people remembered His past faithfulness in Scripture?

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Ask a volunteer to read Joshua 4:1-24.

What would you say was the theme of Joshua's message and instruction in these verses?

What was significant about God's instructions after crossing the Jordan River?

Why would it have been important to teach future generations of God's past faithfulness? Why is it still important?

Last week, we read about how God helped the Israelites cross the Jordan River against all odds. When the Jordan was at flood stage, the priests carried the ark of the covenant into the river, and God made the water stand still, allowing His people to cross on dry ground. Our passage records that "the entire nation" (v. 1) crossed the Jordan, and then God spoke to Joshua.

God gave Joshua instructions to construct a monument to act as a "sign" for the people. The entire nation crossed the Jordan, and all twelve tribes were to be represented in the memorial the people were to construct. The men took stones from the dry ground that God had created in the middle of the Jordan. The procurement of these stones was as unlikely as crossing of the Jordan without the Lord's help.

When God brought the Israelites out of Egypt, they quickly forgot His faithfulness and lost faith. This is human nature. Just like generations of God's people before us, we can be quick to forget how God helped us in the past when faced with dire circumstances.

As God was leading them into the promised land, this memorial was meant to remind the people that God was faithful before, and they could trust Him to be faithful again. It was meant to inspire faith in moments where hope was dwindling. This reminder was not only for the current generation, but future generations too. God has never failed His people.

The miracle was performed “in the sight of the people” (v. 11)—their personal testimony stood as a reminder of God’s past faithfulness, just like the monument the people constructed. This, too, was meant to be passed down from generation to generation. When God is faithful to us today, we should talk about it! It is a testament to God’s goodness and brings Him glory.

What stands out from Joshua’s speech in verses 21–24?

What does it mean to fear the Lord your God? (v. 24) Why is that important?

What did Joshua say God’s purpose in this miracle was? How is this ultimately the purpose in all of God’s acts?

Joshua reiterated that the people were meant to tell stories of God’s past faithfulness to future generations. When God is faithful to us, we should tell our children and our grandchildren. This isn’t a substitute for a personal relationship with the Lord, but it helps them get to know God’s character and goodness.

Joshua correctly assigned credit for this miracle firmly to God, and pointed to His past faithfulness to their people: “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” (v. 23). God made a way for them at the Jordan, just as He had made a way for them at the Red Sea, and He would make a way for them again in the future. He was faithful before, and He would be faithful again.

Joshua named two purposes for this miracle. The first was so people would know that the Lord’s hand is strong. God stated a similar purpose for the plagues He brought back in Egypt. God is sovereign and mighty. He is the only one who can save. The second is to remind the people to fear the Lord. When Scripture talks about fearing the Lord, it does not mean fear like we might normally think of, but rather the proper reverence and respect that God deserves. When we fear the Lord, we obey His commands. This would be crucial for the Israelites to remain faithful to God.

How can we live in proper reverence for the Lord every day?

Application

Offer the following action steps for the application of God's word.

How do you share with others about God's faithfulness in your life? How easy or difficult do you find this?

How do you honor and remember past moments where God was faithful in your life? How do those past moments of faithfulness give you faith and hope for the future?

What can we learn from this passage as we think about sharing our faith with those around us?

Pray

Thank God for the ways He has shown up for you in the past. Ask Him to show you how and when He wants you to share with those who don't know Him yet.

OCTOBER 19

All In

JOSHUA 5:1-12

Is there anything you're doing for God that you need to pause for a moment in order to be strengthened by remembering what He's done in the past?

We are a little like the Israelites on the doorstep of the promised land today, trusting God to lead us into something new and profound (and a little scary). As we step into God's plan for our church and community by working to reach the lost, disciple believers, and send them out for important kingdom work, we must fully commit our hearts to Him. Now is the time to go all in for Christ in ways that can't be reversed and stick with you permanently. God calls us to be all in for the kingdom. Are you ready?

THIS WEEK'S MEMORY VERSE

Joshua 5:9

The Lord then said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the disgrace of Egypt from you." Therefore, that place is still called Gilgal today.



UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

The crossing of the river terrorized the Canaanite populace. Before Israel could proceed, however, the people had to prepare themselves spiritually.

God ordered Joshua to renew their covenant commitment by circumcision, the sign of God's election of Abraham and his descendants (see Gen. 17). Circumcision had been abandoned during Israel's sojourn in the wilderness because of disobedience. This new generation underwent circumcision as a test of their loyalty to the Lord. By following God's directions, Joshua in effect disabled his whole army. Because of their circumcision, God named the place Gilgal, meaning a rolling. God explained that He had rolled away the disgrace of Egyptian bondage.

The people celebrated a new Passover (see Exod. 12; Lev. 23:4–5; Num. 9:1–14). The Passover festival remembered God's deliverance of Israel when the angel of death plagued the firstborn of Egypt. (See the feature article "Israel's Festivals and Feasts.") For God's people today, Jesus is the Passover Lamb who delivers them from sin and death (1 Cor. 5:7).

The people for the first time began to eat food harvested from Canaan. In the wilderness their diet was the manna provided by God. The cessation of manna and their harvest of the land were reminiscent of God's promises that they would possess a land flowing with milk and honey (Exod. 3:8).

Also the Lord prepared Joshua spiritually by appearing to him. Joshua did not recognize the Lord until He identified Himself as the commander of the Lord's armies. Like Moses, Joshua stood on holy ground because of the presence of God (see Exod. 3:1–12). He humbled himself by taking off his sandals.

Joshua 5:1-12

When all the Amorite kings across the Jordan to the west and all the Canaanite kings near the sea heard how the Lord had dried up the water of the Jordan before the Israelites until they had crossed over, they lost heart and their courage failed because of the Israelites.

2 *At that time the Lord said to Joshua, "Make flint knives and circumcise the Israelite men again."* **3** *So Joshua made flint knives and circumcised the Israelite men at Gibeath-haaraloth.*

4 *This is the reason Joshua circumcised them: All the people who came out of Egypt who were males—all the men of war—had died in the wilderness along the way after they had come out of Egypt.* **5** *Though all the people who came out were circumcised, none of the people born in the wilderness along the way were circumcised after they had come out of Egypt.*

6 *For the Israelites wandered in the wilderness forty years until all the nation's men of war who came out of Egypt had died off because they did not obey the Lord. So the Lord vowed never to let them see the land he had sworn to their ancestors to give us, a land flowing with milk and honey.* **7** *He raised up their sons in their place; it was these Joshua circumcised. They were still uncircumcised, since they had not been circumcised along the way.* **8** *After the entire nation had been circumcised, they stayed where they were in the camp until they recovered.* **9** *The Lord then said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the disgrace of Egypt from you." Therefore, that place is still called Gilgal today.*

10 *While the Israelites camped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, they observed the Passover on the evening of the fourteenth day of the month.* **11** *The day after Passover they ate unleavened bread and roasted grain from the produce of the land.* **12** *And the day after they ate from the produce of the land, the manna ceased. Since there was no more manna for the Israelites, they ate from the crops of the land of Canaan that year.*

DAILY EXPLORATION

Use this section for your personal Bible study time before you meet with your group.

DAY 1

Commitment

Read Joshua 5:2-7.

The idea of “committing” to something might call up ideas of wedding bells, universities, or sports teams, but this week we are going to talk about the ultimate commitment: committing our hearts fully to God.

God commanded Joshua and the Israelite people to complete a very important act of commitment: circumcision. It was a permanent sign of God’s covenant with them and was required for Abraham’s descendants as a part of God’s covenant in Genesis 17. Their flesh now bore the sign that they were God’s people. This was a sign that they were turning away from the unfaithfulness of the generation before them and turning their hearts firmly toward God.

We are a little like the Israelites on the doorstep of the promised land today, trusting God to lead us into something new and profound (and a little scary). As we step into God’s plan for our church and community by working to reach the lost, disciple believers, and send them out for important kingdom work, we must fully commit our hearts to Him. Now is the time to go all in for Christ, in ways that can’t be reversed and stick with you permanently. God calls us to be all in for the kingdom, and the question we must ask is: Are we all in... or not?

Do you think you are “all in” for Jesus in your life? Reflect honestly on this. In what areas are you holding back? What could you do differently?

Thank God for the way He has provided for you in life. Ask for His help as you seek to go all in for Him. Ask Him to show you how to do this, and gently point out the areas you are holding back from Him.

DAY 2

All In Obedience

Read Luke 9:57–62.

In our modern context, this teaching might seem harsh.

Shouldn't the man be able to go home to mourn and care for his father? Shouldn't the other be allowed to go and say goodbye to his family? That seems like something Jesus would be okay with, right?

Scholars believe it is unlikely that the first man's father was already dead. More likely, he produced a reason to delay obedience to following Jesus. In the case of the other, this may, in fact, be hyperbole, but Jesus was making an important point.

The point, in both cases, is discipleship requires you to be all in. Being all in means sacrifice and hardship. Effective discipleship requires us to put Christ first. That means denying ourselves and instead fully and faithfully following God's plan for our lives (even when it leads us into seasons or situations that make us uncomfortable). For the worker who is plowing, when he looks back instead of looking forward at his task, he plows a crooked line! He isn't able to complete the job. For modern disciples of Jesus, we "look back" when we take our eyes off Jesus and attempt to go our own way. We aren't all in when we look back.

Reflect on your relationship with God today. Are there any ways you are "looking back?" What needs to change?

Thank God for being a trustworthy leader. Thank Him for working ahead of you even when you can't see the results of that work. Ask for His help as you consider how you may be "looking back" in your walk with Christ.

DAY 3

God's Love

Read Deuteronomy 6:4–5.

God's love for His people is evident throughout Scripture. This was true in His care and provision for His people in the Old Testament. Think of Joshua, how God encouraged Him, went before Him, and paved the way for His people as they began occupying the promised land. He loved us so much that He sent Jesus to die on the cross so our sins could be forgiven (John 3:16), and not only that, He did this while we were still sinners (Romans 5:8). Consider how incredible that is! He didn't expect us to earn anything first. Instead, He freely gave the most precious gift because He loves us so much. God is love (1 John 4:16).

God loves us so completely, in ways we can't comprehend, and Jesus said that the greatest commandment was to love Him completely too (Matthew 22:37–39). We are called to go all in in our love for the Lord. When we love God this way, we are fully devoted and deeply committed. We love God with our emotions, with our intellect, with our resources, and with our abilities, and not just as suggestion, but a command.

When we are wholly committed to God, and love Him this way, we live for Him. We obey what He tells us. We walk out the Great Commission, telling others about Him and making disciples as we go about our lives. But first, we must go all in.

How are you currently seeking to love God fully? How could you seek growth in this?

**Thank God for loving us, even when we don't deserve it.
Thank Him for teaching us how to love. Ask Him to point out ways you could love Him more fully and ask for His help to do so.**

DAY 4

Paul's Example

Read Galatians 2:19–20.

This passage in Galatians was written by the apostle Paul. One of the big battles he waged in the early church was around circumcision. As we talked about earlier this week, circumcision was required under the old covenant with Abraham, but Jesus ushered in a new covenant. All the works Jews were previously required to perform before (sacrifices, purification, celebration of festivals, and circumcision) were no longer needed after Jesus. He fulfilled the law perfectly in our place. So when certain groups of Jews tried to teach Gentiles that they must first be circumcised before they could become Christians, Paul wrote to correct this. We can't earn our own salvation by works. If we could, there would have been no need for Jesus (Galatians 2:21).

When Paul became a Christian, he was no longer subject to the law. The person he used to be was crucified with Christ, and he was a new creation in Jesus. Now the Holy Spirit lived in him. Now, Paul's entire life was guided by his faith in Jesus. Paul was the very definition of all in. He was no longer subject to the law, but he was subject to Jesus's commands, like the Great Commission. Paul's blueprint for relationship building and evangelism is still one we learn from and use today.

As we think about being all in for Jesus, consider Paul's example. He did what the Lord guided him to do, even when it went against his plans (Acts 16:6–10). He followed Jesus even when it put him personally at risk (Acts 14:19). He was all in, even when it sent him straight to prison (Acts 16:22–40). When we are fully walking in faith, we will also be committed to this degree.

Think about our bold vision to reach 5,000 people for Christ over the next 10 years. What can we learn from Paul's example as we pursue this work?

Thank God for the gift of His Son. Thank Him for making a way for us to be in relationship with Him. Ask for His help as you seek to be all in for Jesus, like Paul was.

DAY 5

Living Sacrifice

Read Romans 12:1-2.

Paul lived out a great example of how to be a living sacrifice to God. Once he became a Christian, he didn't get everything perfect (Romans 7:15-25), but he did consistently and obediently seek out God's plan for his life and follow it.

Being a living sacrifice means living completely for the Lord. Jesus sits firmly at the top of our priorities, and we consider all our own wishes and desires to be less important than living for Him. This type of living pleases and honors God. It's worshipful and points people to the gospel.

We renew our minds when we devote ourselves to spiritual disciplines like reading, studying, and memorizing God's Word, prayer, and quiet time alone with God. When we devote ourselves to seeking to grow closer to the Lord in this way, we learn more about Him and His character. He teaches us things. He guides us. We become more in tune with His will. Consider a marriage relationship. What if the only things a wife knew about her husband were things that someone else had told her, but she never spent any time with him? That would make a terrible relationship! When we aren't renewing our minds, we neglect our relationship with God in a similarly absurd way.

Living this way requires all of us and costs a lot. But we can be certain it will be so worth the effort.

How are you "renewing your mind" currently? How might you pursue this further?

Thank God for His good plan for our lives. Thank Him for giving us the ability to study and know Him more! Ask for His help and guidance as you seek to more actively renew your mind and live as a living sacrifice for Him.

EXPLORE THE TEXT:

GROUP DISCUSSION

Main Point

In Israel's covenant renewal, they committed their whole hearts to God. We are called to do the same.

Introduction

Look back on the first page of this week to discuss the intro.

What have been your takeaways in our study of the book of Joshua so far?

What does it mean to commit to something?

When you think of committing to God, what comes to mind?

In our "For the Kingdom" series, we've been studying the journey of Joshua and the Israelite people as they made the transition from wandering in the wilderness to settling into the land God promised them, the promised land. We've read stories of God's wonderful faithfulness to His people in the perfect unfolding of His plan, and today, we'll see them take another step of obedience by re-committing themselves to the Lord.

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Ask a volunteer to read Joshua 5:1-12.

In this passage, God gave His people a sign to remember His faithfulness. What are some ways we can seek to remember God's faithfulness daily?

Why was the act of circumcision important for the Israelite people before they entered the promised land?

How would a permanent reminder of their covenant with God be particularly useful given the task that was before them?

In the first verse of our passage, we see evidence of the Lord working ahead of His people, preparing the way for the Israelites to occupy the land as a part of God's plan. Word of God's powerful acts on behalf of His people had spread and created fear in the hearts of the kings of the land the Israelites would soon occupy. This would have been a strategic time to attack the Israelites, but God provided for and protected them. This fear bought them time to complete what God would ask of them next.

God had another act of preparation in mind: circumcision. The Israelite men who had been delivered in the Exodus had been circumcised (they died off in the wilderness), but the men who had been born during the wandering period were not. In our reading, God commanded Joshua to circumcise them, and Joshua obeyed, circumcising the men of the nation at Gilgal (v. 9). Modern scholars recognize that God's commanded instrument, "flint knives" (v. 2), were made by chipping away the outer layer of rock to expose sharp, sterile stone, making this undertaking safer and more sterile (another way God provided for the safety of His people).

Circumcision was a sign of God's covenant with Abraham back in Genesis 17: "My covenant will be marked in your flesh as a permanent covenant" (v.13). The Israelites, as children of Abraham, ought to have been circumcised already, as God commanded in Genesis, but were not. In this act, they were re-committing to this covenant and offering a tangible sign that they would be faithful to God.

What might God have meant by, "I have rolled away the disgrace of Egypt from you" (v. 9)?

The “disgrace” referenced in verse 9 likely refers to the unfaithfulness of the past generation. Even after the wonders God performed in front of them, and on their behalf, they were unfaithful in the wilderness, not just by not circumcising their children, but also by not trusting God to provide for them and instead complaining and taking matters into their own hands.

Why would observation of the Passover at this time be particularly meaningful?

What is significant about the supply of manna ending? What shift did this point toward?

How do these events point to God’s past faithfulness?

The Passover was celebrated in remembrance of God bringing His people out of Egypt in the events of the Exodus. How appropriate that this celebration would also end their time of wandering in the wilderness. This was the ultimate reminder of God’s faithfulness (He was faithful before, and He’ll be faithful again).

Not only did they celebrate the Passover, they celebrated it with “the produce of the land” (v.11), a sweet fulfilment of God’s promise to His people. Then, the day after they ate the produce God had been preparing ahead of them, the manna stopped. Manna was a sign of God’s provision in the wilderness, and now, He would provide for them in new ways. This was another sign to begin their time in the promised land.

Application

Offer the following action steps for the application of God's word.

Circumcision was a way for the people to show that they were all in for trusting and following God. How do we demonstrate this today?

What does it mean to commit our hearts fully to God? How do we do this?

How does personal commitment lead us to tell others about Jesus also?

Pray

Thank God for the way He has provided for you in life. Praise Him for the wonderful ways He has worked in your life. Ask for His help as you seek to go all in for Him. Ask Him to show you how to do this, and gently point out the areas you are holding back from Him.

OCTOBER 26

God Gives the Victory

JOSHUA 6

What was a time or event that you eagerly awaited? What did the anticipation feel like?

How did you approach God as you waited? Was prayer easy or hard during that time? Why?

Anticipation is a part of life. We get fired up waiting for big moments—for graduations, weddings, or jobs. The nation of Israel had to wait 40 years to enter the Promised Land after leaving Egypt. But in their anticipation, they never imagined the obstacle before them or how God would see them through it. When we approach obstacles with prayer, those obstacles become opportunities in the hands of a powerful and faithful God.

THIS WEEK'S MEMORY VERSE

Joshua 6:27

And the Lord was with Joshua, and his fame spread throughout the land.



UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

The city of Jericho stood in the way of Israel's possession of the land. The city was one of the oldest in the world, but it was not particularly large. The Bible presents Jericho as a formidable city with imposing walls that could not be scaled.

Joshua and the people marched in silence around the city one time for each of six days. On the seventh day they marched seven times. At the appropriate signal the priests blew their trumpets, and the people gave a mighty shout. The walls collapsed, and the soldiers entered straight into the city.

The organization of the march placed the ark at the center of the parade. The ark indicated that God was in their midst as He was when they crossed the Jordan. No military general could have accepted such a plan, but Joshua was not counting on human ingenuity. The purpose of the strategy was to test their faith and their patience. By faith the walls collapsed (Heb. 11:30).

The spies rescued Rahab and her family, but the rest of the population was killed and the city burned. The city and all that was in it were "devoted to the Lord." The expression "devoted" (herem) meant that the city was banned from Israelite possession because it was solely for the Lord (see Deut. 20:16–18). The ban removed any economic motivation for the Israelites' action. It was a "holy war" because Israel fought at the instructions of the Lord and received no benefits from the city's destruction.

The ban was not always employed by the Israelites, and even when in effect there were exceptions. The exceptions at Jericho were Rahab and some costly metals that were placed in the Lord's treasury. By the grace of God, Rahab was spared from the ban because of her faith (Heb. 11:31).

God placed Canaanite cities under the ban so that Israel would not fall victim to the sinful influence of their enemies (Deut. 20:18). In this case the ban was eternal, and anyone who rebuilt the city was cursed of God. The truth of God's word was demonstrated in the judgment rendered against Hiel, who lost his two sons for rebuilding the city (1 Kgs. 16:34).

Joshua 6:22-27

22 Joshua said to the two men who had scouted the land, "Go to the prostitute's house and bring the woman out of there, and all who are with her, just as you swore to her."

23 So the young men who had scouted went in and brought out Rahab and her father, mother, brothers, and all who belonged to her. They brought out her whole family and settled them outside the camp of Israel.

24 They burned the city and everything in it, but they put the silver and gold and the articles of bronze and iron into the treasury of the Lord's house. **25** However, Joshua spared Rahab the prostitute, her father's family, and all who belonged to her, because she hid the messengers Joshua had sent to spy on Jericho, and she still lives in Israel today.

26 At that time Joshua imposed this curse:

*The man who undertakes
the rebuilding of this city, Jericho,
is cursed before the Lord.
He will lay its foundation
at the cost of his firstborn;
he will finish its gates
at the cost of his youngest.*

27 And the Lord was with Joshua, and his fame spread throughout the land.

DAILY EXPLORATION

Use this section for your personal Bible study time before you meet with your group.

DAY 1

Faithful Obedience

Read Joshua 6:20–21.

God is all-powerful, able to make the walls of Jericho crumble with a (metaphorical) snap of His fingers. He can do anything . . . but have you ever noticed that He didn't? He could have miraculously emptied the land for His people. He could have made their task very easy. But He didn't. God designed a situation that required faithful obedience. The people were faithful to follow God's (somewhat unexpected) instructions, and God caused the walls of Jericho to fall. He gave the people victory.

He works the same way today. He doesn't do everything for us. He gives us the tools and the faith to respond to His call. We are facing a similarly daunting task as a church: reaching 5,000 people for the gospel over the next 10 years. This is a big task. One God could do without us, but, in His goodness, He desires to use us. That is amazing. We are imperfect. We are going to mess up. We are going to miss the opportunity to walk through doors He opens. Still, He wants to use us to spread the good news in our community and bring glory to Himself.

He has worked ahead of us, preparing the way for the work He will do, and He stands with us. It is our responsibility to walk forward in faith.

What makes you nervous as you think about the task God has given our church? What about something God has called you to personally?

Thank God for picking you to be a part of the work He wants to do in our community. Ask for His help and guidance as you obediently walk forward in faith.

DAY 2

Rahab

Read Joshua 6:22-23.

In the conquest of Jericho, some scholars believe the 6 days of marching before the walls fell gave the people of Jericho an opportunity to surrender, but only Rahab the prostitute acted in faith. In response, God preserved her and her family. God delights in using the unlikely. Perhaps the most wonderful part of Rahab's story is how God worked through her generations after her death. Rahab, a Gentile (a non-Jew), is in the lineage of both King David and Jesus.

We, too, are presented with opportunities to act in faith daily—to choose a healthy fear of the Lord over fear of social consequences. Jesus has given us the Great Commission as a command, and the Lord has presented us with the opportunity as a church body to work together to spread the good news in our community. Do you consider yourself a poor candidate for this task? Remember Rahab. God worked through an unlikely Gentile prostitute, and He wants to work through you, too. Step one is moving forward in bold faith.

What hesitations do you have about living out the Great Commission in our community? What are some steps you could take to work through them?

Thank God for the vision He has given our church. Ask Him to help you work through any hesitations you have about more openly sharing your faith.

DAY 3

God's Faithfulness

Read Isaiah 41:8-10.

The biblical history of God's chosen people is a roller coaster of ups and downs. Of victorious mountaintops and deep, dark valleys. Through it all, one thing remained the same: The Lord their God went with them. Even when they turned their backs on Him and worshipped false gods, God was there, desiring and opening doors for restoration. Even when they earned the consequences of exile, God went with them and planned for their redemption and return. When they were faithless, God was faithful.

God had begun a good work in them, and He saw His plan through. God finishes what He starts. God has started something in our church. He planted a bold vision in our hearts: for the Lord to use us to reach 5,000 people for Christ in the next 10 years. We know that God is with us. We don't have to be afraid because He has prepared the way before us and walks with us now. He will faithfully finish what He is starting in our congregation, and, perhaps most amazingly, He wants to use all of us (yes, that includes you) in this work for His kingdom and His glory.

Set a timer for 5 minutes to pray and meditate over our vision to reach 5,000 people for Christ. What did this time call up for you (any hesitations, excitement, direction, peace)? Reflect on it below.

Thank God for preparing the way before us and going with us as we walk faithfully in His plan for our church. Ask Him to help you understand the next steps He wants you to take.

DAY 4

He Works All Things For Good

Read Romans 8:28–30.

This familiar passage has comforted countless generations of believers. God works all things together for our good. There is no situation God cannot work through, and He always works for our good. Don't mistake what "good" means here, though. This good is defined by God and not us. These words were written by the apostle Paul to the church in Rome. Think of the things God worked out for good in Paul's life: imprisonment, near-death beatings, shipwrecks, and radical changes. God worked in every single circumstance, for Paul's good, and for His own glory.

God's definition of good molds our lives to be "conformed to the image of his Son" (v. 29). It's about shaping us to live like Jesus. God's definition of good can remove friendships and social circles from our lives, send us out of our comfort zone, and take us places we wouldn't naturally go. Even when God's will leads us to unexpected places, we can take comfort in the truth of this passage. God is working, in all things, in ways we often don't see until later, for our good.

This is a vital truth to take with us as we seek to actively share the good news in our community. Even when times feel hard, something happens that hurts, or we must sacrifice something to carry out God's plan . . . God is with us and God is working everything out for good.

Consider our vision to share Christ with 5,000 people over the next 10 years. What are some ways that God could work things out for good, even in the hard moments?

Thank God for having a plan for our lives, and for working things out for our good. Ask Him to help you step out in faith to share the good news in our community.

DAY 5

Sanctification

Read Philippians 1:3–6.

Today's passage comes from the apostle Paul's letter to the Philippians. Despite challenges in the congregation, the church at Philippi's enthusiastic embrace of Christ and the good news was worth celebrating and giving thanks for.

The "good work" (v. 6) Paul had in mind was sanctification, the lifelong process of the Holy Spirit molding us to be more like Christ. He began this work when we accepted the gift of salvation, and He's going until it is complete.

One of the key tenants of Jesus's ministry was sharing the good news (Matthew 6:23). Part of the Holy Spirit's work to mold us to be more like Jesus, means we grow in telling people about Jesus. We share our faith even when it costs us something. This mission is so vital that Jesus commanded all His followers to pursue it (Matthew 28:19–20). God is calling our church family to be faithful to this command. He gave us a bold vision, and He has a plan for how it will unfold. It may not work out like we expect, but we know God will work. Will you join Him?

What are some first steps you could take to begin sharing your faith with someone God has placed in your life?

Thank God for giving us the opportunity to work for His kingdom and glory. Praise Him for the amazing fact that He wants to use you. Thank Him for the weeks of this series that He has used to prepare our hearts and unite our church for the work ahead. Ask God to give you courage and a game plan as you begin to work to share the gospel in your community.

EXPLORE THE TEXT:

GROUP DISCUSSION

Main Point

God's methods may be unexpected, but He always finishes what He starts.

Introduction

Look back on the first page of this week to discuss the intro.

What big takeaways have you had so far in our For the Kingdom series?

What moments of victory stand out to you from the history of God's people recorded in the Bible? Why?

Why do you think God sometimes works in ways that don't make sense to us?

In this series, we've been studying Joshua's journey as the new leader of God's people. God brought His people into the promised land, then assured them of victory when they were obedient in occupying the land. Today, we'll read the account of Joshua and the Israelites stepping out in faith to claim the victory God promised them in Jericho.

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Ask a volunteer to read Joshua 6:1-27.

What stands out to you in the instructions that the Lord gave in verses 2-5?

How might you respond if you were one of the Israelites marching around the city for 6 days in a row with seemingly nothing happening?

God could make the wall fall on the first day (or in any manner He chose!). Why might He choose to have the people march?

Following Moses's death, God had encouraged Joshua, promised to go with the people, protected the spies sent to Jericho (through Rahab's intervention), miraculously parted the waters of the Jordan River at flood stage to allow the people to cross, renewed His covenant with the people through circumcision, sent the commander of His army to Joshua, and now, the time had come for the people to march on Jericho.

The city of Jericho was locked down because the Lord put fear into the people's hearts (Joshua 2:9–11).

Notice in the Lord's words to Joshua, He spoke in past tense. The victory was already decided. The people just had to walk in faithfulness. In kindness, God gave Joshua the entire game plan in advance.

Look at Joshua's speech in verses 16–19. How did Joshua speak and give orders in keeping with God's faithfulness?

After he received God's instructions, Joshua obediently followed them. The people marched around the city in the presence of God (via the ark), for 6 days, as the Lord had commanded. Then, on the seventh day, they marched around the city 7 times, and when the priests blew the horns and the people shouted (note Joshua's faith in v.16: "For the Lord has given you the city."), the walls fell, just as God said they would.

What is significant about Rahab and her family in this story?

How do you see God's care and provision for His people in this passage?

Some scholars believe the 6-day march gave the people of Jericho an opportunity to surrender, but they did not take it. In the city, only Rahab the prostitute acted on faith (at great personal risk). Her faith is honored in this passage and in the New Testament (Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25). Rahab, a Gentile (non-Jew), would go on to be in the lineage of both King David and Jesus.

The remains of Jericho were to act as a testament to God's power and judgement on the people of Jericho because of their resistance to God. The curse Joshua imposed was fulfilled, as recorded in 1 Kings 16:34.

Where do you need to trust God in a seemingly overwhelming circumstance?

God, who had begun a work in the Israelites by delivering them out of slavery in Egypt (and even earlier in His selection of Abraham's family!), stuck with the people, going with them into the land He had promised. God always finishes what He starts.

In our For the Kingdom series, we've been studying God's faithfulness to His people. We started this series with the truth that God's will always prevails. Today, we're ending it with another truth: God finishes what He starts. For Jersey Church, this series marks the start of a bold vision God has given us: to see 5,000 people come to know Christ by 2035. We know that God, who is beginning this work in our church, will faithfully finish what He starts, and He wants to use you in this work for His Kingdom and for His glory.

We are sure to see some unexpected twists and turns along the way, but we have faith that God has a plan (and it's better than any we could come up with). Now it's our job to be obedient and step forward in faith.

Are you ready?

Application

Offer the following action steps for the application of God's word.

Has God ever called you to do something that felt hard or even impossible? How did you respond?

How does today's passage remind us of the importance of godly community in living obediently for God?

How is God calling you to step out in faith now? How will you respond?

Pray

Thank God for the opportunity to work for His Kingdom and for His glory. Praise Him for the amazing fact that He wants to use you. Thank Him for the weeks of this series that He has used to prepare our hearts and unite our church for the work ahead. Ask God to give you courage and a game plan as you seek to share the gospel in your community.

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