

Read Joshua 1

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go." Josh 1:9

One of the toughest adjustments in ministry that my wife has dealt with is moving. She lived in the same house growing up until she moved to college (there might have been another house for a short time), and certainly the same town. She was not used to packing or moving like I was as an army brat. I was so used to moving as a child, that I began to enjoy it. I often found things that had been missing for months under my bed or the couch. So when we got married, Nikki found herself in a marriage that would move her 7 times in 11 years. Much of that was a result of college and during seminary, and it was never a fun process for her. Our ministry moves have usually been to places where we know absolutely no one. Why did we do this? Because God instructed us to. If you're just moving around for the sake of moving, then you're living the aimless kind of life that a lost person lives. But a Christian's steps are ordered by the Lord. He has specific and detailed plans for your life.

Young Joshua had to be the man to take Israel onto this journey, though I'm sure he would have liked Moses to lead. Regardless, he was comforted to know that the Lord had led the way for this journey. They weren't just walking into a place because it looked ok, but because it was God's plan for them. **Do you feel like you're wandering? You know what the Bible says about God's plans for your life, but you sure don't see them. I encourage you to stop what you're doing and ask Him what it is that He has for you next. Often times, people wonder what God wants to do, but they don't take the time to ask Him. Be strong and not afraid. The Lord is with you if you're a believer in Jesus Christ. If you've never taken steps of trust, then your life will never lead you anywhere that will be totally satisfying.**

Read Joshua 2

It shall come about that anyone who goes out of the doors of your house into the street, his blood shall be on his own head, and we shall be free; but anyone who is with you in the house, his blood shall be on our head if a hand is laid on him. Josh 2:19

The army is absolutely meticulous when it comes to record keeping. Every unit has a supply sergeant who gives each soldier all the equipment he needs. Then the sergeant fills out a hand receipt showing the items you received, the number of items, and then gets your signature to verify you received them. Six years later when I was leaving the unit, I knew I was short on some gear. You are permitted to write off items that were severely damaged, but I knew that I had simply failed to keep up with everything during the course of my stay. So I spent nearly \$100 buying replacement items from a local military surplus store to handle my losses.

In today's world, personal accountability seems to be a long forgotten idea. If something bad happens it's someone else's fault for not explaining things to us, or someone else didn't do their job, or God didn't do His job. As the spies come into the promised land,

they make a promise to Rahab that they will spare her family since she helped them on their mission. She was responsible for tying a scarlet cord in her window and all Israel would be alerted to not attack that home. But, if someone wandered out of her house during the fighting, that was just too bad, because Israel wasn't going to be there to ask questions. She would be responsible if anyone from her household perished, not Israel. **Do you need to take responsibility for a situation in your life? Maybe you need to take greater responsibility and accountability for the actions of your children, instead of dismissing them as disobedient. Maybe you need to improve your situation at work by being a more efficient worker, instead of complaining about those around you who don't work as hard. We have responsibility for accountability with the Lord. There are certain things He expects from us as a believer. Do not dismiss those things you know you ought to do, but be diligent in doing them.**

Read Joshua 3

and when those who carried the ark came into the Jordan, and the feet of the priests carrying the ark were dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks all the days of harvest), 16 the waters which were flowing down from above stood and rose up in one heap, a great distance away at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan; and those which were flowing down toward the sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. So the people crossed opposite Jericho. Josh 3:15-16

Faith can be a difficult thing. So much that is required of us demands that we trust Him in situations that we have no control over. It reminds me of fire drills in school and how silly they were. The alarm goes off, and then we very calmly line up at our classroom door, then walk in a line out the door and go outside and calmly take attendance. I'm thankful this was never tested on us in a real fire. Bob Smiley, a Christian comedian, commented on how they always tell you in fire drills "walk, don't run." Bob says "Um, if there's a fire...I'm running."

Imagine the faith of these priests in Joshua 3. Not only are they told to cross a flooded Jordan river (which in some areas can flood up to a mile across), but to cross while carrying a heavy, gold covered ark. They may have worried they'd get halfway through and the water wouldn't recede? But, as soon as they touch the water, it piles up into a wall upriver, while the rest runs downriver. And God not only clears their path of the water, but dries the normally muddy ground, just as He did at the Red Sea. It seems God was giving this new and younger generation their "Red Sea" moment that they could recall in difficult times. **How do you handle your struggles of faith? Do you pretend they're not there? Ignoring them will not help, but instead take them to God. Ask Him questions honestly and then wait for His answer. Habakkuk honestly and respectfully questioned God, and God gave him the answers. Remember a great faith victory from your past. When God is calling you to a new level of faith, remember what He has already done. That's been one of my greatest supports when new challenges of faith come; I simply remember all that He has done for me in the past.**

Read Joshua 4

For the priests who carried the ark were standing in the middle of the Jordan until everything was completed that the LORD had commanded Joshua to speak to the people, according to all that Moses had commanded Joshua. And the people hurried and crossed; Josh 4:10

You know what I think is the easiest thing to quit? Running. I've had a love/hate relationship with running since my days in the Army. It takes me about 2 weeks to get into good running shape, and once I'm there and building endurance I really enjoy it. However, those 2 weeks leading up to getting in shape is tough. If you're a runner you know what I mean. You start looking at points in front of you on the track or trail that you can stop because your legs hurt or you just need a quick rest. Once your brain is focused on quitting, you'll quit. So I always set my goals before I start running so that what I need to do won't be forgotten when I start to feel a little tired.

Of all the bad testimonies that we can give as Christians, few match that of a quitter. Can you imagine if these priests had been quitters? They had to stand in the middle of the Jordan the entire time that God was holding the water back. There is a huge pile of water not far from you, and if it breaks, you're dead. The Bible says in verse 18 that when the priests stepped out of the water, the river went back the way it was before. But, if they had quit, they would have likely lost their own lives, possibly the lives of others, and the stones of remembrance wouldn't have been gathered. God wanted the people to make a memorial of what God did. If they had quit there would be no memorial and nothing to teach the children about God's faithfulness in that situation. **Are you tempted to quit? When you're really tired or even remotely under the weather, are you willing to check out of church? Are you tired of teaching Sunday School and want to get out of your commitment? I can't tell you how thankful I am that God keeps His commitment to believers in Christ. I'm not worried about Hell or God ignoring me. I know as a believer that He is committed to me for eternity. How easily we seem to break our side of the commitment. Remember that you entered into a two way promise with Jesus: He promised to save you from your sins and change your life, and you promised to make Him Savior and Lord and stay away from your sins and live a changed life. Don't quit. Do all that God has led you to do, and don't wait for someone else to pick up the slack. We have all eternity to relax from our labors. Don't quit.**

Read Joshua 5

He said, "No; rather I indeed come now as captain of the host of the LORD." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, "What has my lord to say to his servant?" Josh 5:14 If you were unaware, let me tell you just how cool God is! Normally I read the Bible first before I pray, but this morning after a men's breakfast I came home to find my family still asleep, and I took time for prayer beforehand (never know when those girls are going to get up!). As I was praying I was thinking about all the good plans God has for me. Some I've already seen and lived through, but there are many more that I have no idea about. But, it's not just for me; God

promises good plans for everyone who chooses to serve Him. Can you imagine what our world would be like if it were full of genuine Christians? Or even 3/4 full? All these people, living out the divine plans of God in their lives, carrying on Kingdom work, would certainly make our planet look much different. Now think if our churches were full of genuine Christians. Or even 3/4 full. Imagine how our churches would look if they were filled with people living out divine plans of God in their lives, and carrying on Kingdom work.

In this instance with Joshua, when this heavenly figure is questioned as to whether He stands with Israel or Jericho, He claims neither. He stands for the plans of the Lord! Many scholars believe that this person who Joshua encountered was the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ (before He was born as a man into flesh). This is partly because Joshua ascribes Lordship to Him, and the person claims that Joshua is on holy ground. Every clear reference of an ordinary angel shows them telling God's servants not to bow to them. This "angel" gives no such command, but receives Joshua in a reverent state. **You need to learn just as Joshua did, that God is not for you. He's for Himself and for His perfect plans that lead to the salvation of nations and the redemption of the world (our plans are usually for ourselves only). If you're not serving God all out, He'll find someone who is. Now personally, I'd rather be a willing vessel for the Lord and know that He is willing to use me as I'm willing to be used. Whose plans are you carrying out in your life: yours or God's? I mean, are you choosing your job, home, church, spouse or other number of life choices based on your desires or His? God is not going to get in line with you. In prayer and through the reading of His Word, we need to get in line with Him.**

Read Joshua 6

Then on the seventh day they rose early at the dawning of the day and marched around the city in the same manner seven times; only on that day they marched around the city seven times. Josh 6:15 I remember the first time I saw the famous "how many licks does it take to get to the center of a Tootsie Roll pop" commercial. In the commercial, they get to 3 before the owl bites into it. I decided since it was clearly such an important question (I mean come on, they made a commercial about it), I would find the answer. Many a time I started the process of licking a tootsie roll pop, only to just bite into it eventually. It's like I would forget what I was trying to accomplish. I finally did it once, but forgot to write it down and I have no idea how many licks it took. The world has continued to wander without that answer I'm sure.

These Israelites walked around this wall a total of 13 times: once a day for six days and then seven times on the seventh day. Don't you think that was a bit boring? Would you enjoy marching around a city of any size? And then on the final day, when the battle is looming, God has them walk around seven times. They would have been too tired for a fight, which was exactly the point of what God was doing. This victory was clearly the Lord's. **Have you ever questioned God's plans? I have to admit, there have been times I've been dissatisfied with the things going on around me. However, I have learned patience. God doesn't work like we do, and His patience allows for**

possibilities that I never could. You may be seeking a new path in your life, such as a career or other decision. If you see God's plans, or feel you have a clear direction, continue to follow it. A wise person once told me "if you're unsure of what to do, keep working off the last word the Lord gave you. It's probably that He's still waiting for you to accomplish it." So if you felt God lead you to something that has turned out to be difficult, it doesn't mean you should quit. Wait on the Lord, and continue to lift up the decision in prayer. It's easy to run ahead or lag behind God's will when we don't speak with Him on a daily basis.

Read Joshua 7

So Achan answered Joshua and said, "Truly, I have sinned against the LORD, the God of Israel, Josh 7:20 My step-father was well liked in our church. He was a teenage boys Sunday School teacher, and people respected his opinion. Eventually, he had an affair and was unwilling to repent and instead sought out divorce. He may have thought that would only affect his family, but it affected our entire church. As the youth minister I had to deal with boys who were hurting because this man who had told them so much about the Bible had chosen to ignore much of it himself. Some of his adult friends were very hurt and wondered why they hadn't been able to see the signs as they prayed and talked with him. Eventually the church did the biblical thing in removing my step-father, who was unrepentant, from membership in the church. It wasn't an easy step for the church or the pastor, but our church could not ignore open and unrepentant sin. Our pastor hoped that a step like this might finally get my step-father's attention.

This chapter in Joshua is one of the great warnings of the Bible. Clearly not everything that happened to Israel is detailed. But, the battle at Ai is described as Israel had to run away from their enemy. As they contemplated their defeat, we see they misunderstood their problem. Suddenly this generation sounds a lot like the previous one, asking why God brought them to a new land just to be defeated. Finally they listen as the Lord reveals that their defeat was the result of sin, not poor planning. **Do you realize how many times this is the case in your life? Defeat by sin. Plans of God delayed in your life because of sin that you have chosen. If you are in sin through rebellion, immorality, deception, or anything else, your sin not only affects you, but those around you. It may not seem so now, but I'm sure Achan thought for a few days he had really gotten away with something. That is, until the battle at Ai turned sour. Israel put Achan and his entire family to death. That seems harsh, but remember Israel's success as a nation was going to depend on its faithfulness as the people of God. A church is no different. If your church is dealing with an unrepentant member, the church must remember that success comes by faithfulness. If you are the person, I ask that you humble yourself and just repent. Don't try to win a fight that God doesn't want you to win.**

Read Joshua 8

So not a man was left in Ai or Bethel who had not gone out after Israel, and they left the city unguarded and pursued Israel. Josh 8:17 When I was in college, I never sat my backpack down. Some people used them to save seats in the dining hall, only to find their seat available and their bag gone. Thieves were on the lookout for a bag of books to sell, so I held onto mine constantly. However, in seminary I saw an odd sight; there were backpacks lying everywhere. People would walk into the lunchroom and just litter the outside hallway with backpacks and satchels. No one was worried about a brother in Christ stealing his stuff, even though books were expensive in seminary and people often had laptops and other items in those bags. It made me realize we were in a much different place where I could set my backpack down without worrying.

Unless you're in seminary, you've probably learned to protect your stuff. People buy alarm systems, or at least the little yard signs that say you have one, to deter thieves from approaching their home. We lock our car doors at night, or have automatic timers to turn lights on and off to deceive thieves. Yet the soldiers of Ai failed to take basic protective measures and left their city unguarded in round two with Israel. **Are you protecting the right things? Ai was fighting the wrong battle, and missed the real threat. I'm afraid parents do this today. Too many parents want to protect their kids, but they pick the wrong battles. They argue over chores that are left undone, but only shake their heads at the friends their kids pick. Our children are such an important asset. Satan wants them and God wants them. God says in Malachi that the main purpose of marriage is to produce godly offspring (Mal. 2:15). God also wants you to guard your marriage. Don't even flirt with a co-worker or family friend of the opposite sex (or the same I suppose). Place a high value on your marriage, your integrity, and on the covenant that you entered with your spouse and the Lord. You may not have children or a spouse yet, or your time may be past. You can encourage others who are in that season, or prepare for when it is your time. Establishing convictions in the middle of the battle is usually too late. That's like waiting for the ship to start sinking before you instruct people how to get to the lifeboats.**

Read Joshua 9

So the men of Israel took some of their provisions, and did not ask for the counsel of the LORD. Josh 9:14 What do you do to help yourself make a big decision? I had a teacher that recommended drawing up the pros and cons sheet and listing everything out. There have been times this has been helpful. Another route is to ask questions. Find people who have been in a similar situation and then apply their counsel to your situation. When I left for seminary I didn't know if I should try to find a ministry position or a secular one. My pastor recommended finding a secular job. So that's what I did, but I didn't really seek the Lord on it. His advice wasn't bad, but as a believer I cannot live off man's counsel alone. I needed to apply that counsel as I prayed and sought God's will. It turns out his good advice wasn't God's will for me.

In this chapter, Joshua and the Israelites put themselves in a terrible position with the people from Gibeon. If they had sought the Lord, it would have been made clear that these were not people to make a covenant with. Instead, they now will have a large

reminder within their borders of their disobedience. Israel was not trying to make an unwise decision, but when you don't seek the counsel of the Lord, bad decisions are most likely to occur. **Do you seek the Lord's counsel, man's counsel, or your own? Do you wonder what you're supposed to do, but never really ask the Lord about it, knowing you should pray but you just don't? There is nothing wrong with receiving guidance from godly people, but ultimately you need to take that information and pray. I believe that God can reveal a situation just between you and Himself, but sometimes it helps me to hear people who have been there before. Seek the Lord's counsel through reading the Scriptures and prayer. As you pray, fast as well. You can take off just one meal, or multiple meals. The point is that you are denying physical needs to prioritize spiritual needs. I'm not saying God doesn't answer my prayers if I eat, but when I turn a day towards prayer, it's amazing that I ever choose to eat after some of the situations the Lord has taken care of during those times.**

Read Joshua 10

So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, Until the nation avenged themselves of their enemies. Is it not written in the book of Jashar? And the sun stopped in the middle of the sky and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day. Josh 10:13
When I was a teenager I heard that NASA had come across an amazing discovery. NASA computers had been doing a simulation of tracing backwards in time by the movement of stars, and found a day missing. They couldn't account for a slice of time where everything just seemed to stop. I first heard about this through an e-mail and later from preachers, and I thought it was amazing that science verified this account. But there are a couple of problems with this: the first is that this experiment never really happened, and secondly, do we need NASA to prove the Bible for us? Faith is about believing the unbelievable not the impossible, because nothing is impossible with God (Luke 1:37).

Scientific creation has taken great strides in the last 30 years to show people the scientific proof of a young earth and proof of biblical events like a worldwide flood. However, nowhere does that proof verify that God actually laid the rocks in their place and that He actually formed the water. This is part of our faith in who God is; that only God could create the many complex systems we see in our bodies, on the planet, and in our universe. **Do you really believe that God made the sun stand still, or do you find another explanation? Is it just a story, or did it really happen? I tell you right now friend, if you don't trust this account of the Bible, why should you trust any? With the Bible you believe it all or you believe none of it. When you start dismissing certain parts and keeping others, you have removed the chance for the Bible to impact your life. Every time you read something that convicts or astounds, you can simply write it off as old-fashioned or fictional. You think the sun standing still is unbelievable, but I find the Son standing still to be crucified on the cross unbelievable as well. Yet I believe it! Trust the Word of God. Trust that just as God stood with Joshua and accomplished unbelievable things (from a human perspective), He didn't accomplish impossible things. Those don't exist for us or our God!**

Read Joshua 11

The LORD delivered them into the hand of Israel, so that they defeated them, Josh 11:8 Many times I've heard the statement from people, "If the Lord wants it to happen, it will happen." While at first glance this sounds right on, think about it a second time. Is every sin we commit the will of the Lord? Is every failure to witness or to speak up for Christ in His will? I heard this statement quite a few times in regards to a church that needed to build a new facility. "If the Lord wants it to happen, it will happen." The Bible is clear that we can resist His will, otherwise we wouldn't be sinners. I once heard a seminary professor say that God gets blamed for more shoddy workmanship than anyone. God is "blamed" for not accomplishing the task, when really it was the people who failed to commit to it.

This principle is evident in the lives of the next generation of Israel. God says that He has delivered them and is giving them the victory, but Israel still had to go fight. If they had sat around and done nothing, the promised victory wouldn't have happened, because they had to step up and accomplish it. One of the great privileges of being saved is that God doesn't need us, but He chooses to use us. **Are you experiencing a series of spiritual victories or failures in your life? What about in your church? What about in your family? These victories and defeats are not apart from your life. God desires to do great things for His children, but disobedience delays the plans of the Lord (like Israel's wanderings), or eliminates them altogether (we'll soon learn of this with King Saul). Do you blame God for the spiritual failures in your life, or do you take accountability for your failures? The great thing about God is we can always confess our failures to Him, and He listens as He loves. As Christians we can sometimes lose our direction, but if you seek the Lord, He will not hide Himself from His people. The distance is created by us.**

Read Joshua 12

Now these are the kings of the land whom Joshua and the sons of Israel defeated beyond the Jordan toward the west, from Baal-gad in the valley of Lebanon even as far as Mount Halak, which rises toward Seir; and Joshua gave it to the tribes of Israel as a possession according to their divisions, Josh 12:7 As I look over this list I can think of one thing...my own list. We all have a list. It is the list of spiritual victories that have occurred in our lives thanks to God. Was Israel a real fighting force? No, they were just people trying to find a place to call their own. In obedience to God, they did fight and were used by God to bring judgment on the wicked nations that were living in Canaan. But, defeat came to Israel when they were disobedient. In Joshua's list even lies the King of Ai we saw a few days ago. That ended well, but didn't start that way.

What does your list look like? Do you give credit to the Lord for the victories and blessings in your life? If you sometimes forget to thank Him as you should, simply put your list together. I can start back as far as being rescued from the hands of the abortion doctor before I was even born. I can think of how God forgave me for numerous transgressions and changed my life through Jesus. I remember how God brought us through the pain of losing children through miscarriage. I can see how

God has led me to every place of ministry that I have served. When you put it altogether, you understand the plans that God has for us. They have ups and downs, but ultimately they are for our blessing and our victory. Truly thank God today for his blessings to you. Write them down if it helps you to concentrate. We are commanded to be thankful (1 Thess. 5:18), and if we choose not to be, we are missing the will and blessings of God. Thank Him today for everything.

Read Joshua 13

With the other half-tribe, the Reubenites and the Gadites received their inheritance which Moses gave them beyond the Jordan to the east, just as Moses the servant of the LORD gave to them Josh 13:8 Do you remember these two groups of people? When Israel came near the promised land, the Reubenites and Gadites felt that the land just across the Jordan was good enough for them, and wouldn't require much of a fight. Moses told them if they were satisfied with that, they could have it, but they would still have to fight in order that the rest of Israel had their land as well. When the time for the fight came, these two tribes did their part, and so they received the initial land they claimed. And for as many times as the Israelites had disappointed their leadership, I'm sure it was a real joy for Joshua to see people keeping a promise they had made to Moses.

We need more promise-keepers amongst God's people. If there was ever a population that would seem trustworthy to do what they say, it would seem that we should be those people. However, Christians are often just as guilty of saying and not doing as anyone else. One of the big problem areas is prayer. Christians promise to pray for people and situations that they have little to no intention of praying for. Just be a person of your word. Say what you intend to do, and nothing more or less. **Are YOU a promise-keeper? Do your words build up a greater testimony of Jesus Christ, or tear Him down in front of an unbelieving world. If we can't be trusted, people will assume that Jesus cannot be trusted either. Let us never be content to see Jesus' name maligned by our poor testimony. Let us live lives that show a real faith, and not just a Sunday morning disposition.**

Read Joshua 14

"Now then, give me this hill country about which the LORD spoke on that day, for you heard on that day that Anakim were there, with great fortified cities; perhaps the LORD will be with me, and I will drive them out as the LORD has spoken." **Josh 14:12** Russ was an older man in my first church that meant a lot to me. I don't know exactly how old he was when cancer ended his life, but between his age and his sickness, he didn't have a lot of strength at the end. But, there were few people I saw serve Jesus like Russ. Every year our church had a living nativity for people to come see as a testimony to the gospel. Every year, Russ would play a third wise man alongside my dad and I. No matter if it was cold, snowy, or balmy (all three can be normal for a Missouri December), he was there. He played a mean Pharisee in our Easter Cantata every year, and helped with setting up the heavy sets prior to practice. One day a few months before he passed away, he showed me a notebook that contained his own running commentary

through the Bible. He knew his time was short, but he didn't give up and continued working on it as he read through the Bible..

In this passage, Caleb is seeking how he can be useful at 85. He wandered in the desert, through no fault of his own, and he was seeking to make up for lost time. His age was no excuse to quit, but a reason to press forward quickly. Churches lose a treasure when older believers "retire" from church? I love to visit with them, listen to them and help them, partly due to my close relationship with a great-grandmother and her friends during my summers. My complaint is with believers who simply check-out. I get asked about retirement and pensions for when I retire, but I'm not sure that I ever will. Why would I quit doing what God has called me to? Why do older believers quit doing what God has called them to? Our Senior Saints have a lot of wisdom and knowledge to pass on, and as young people we need that. **What do you think of the golden years? Are you in them? Keep serving Jesus without fail, in whatever capacity you can. Are you afraid of them? Ask God to calm your heart about the future and to help you with today. Are you nowhere near them? Show the love of Christ to those older than you by serving and listening to them. If you are older, don't look down on yourself and don't stop serving. If you are younger, don't look down on those who are older than you. You may find your Russ.**

Read Joshua 15

Caleb drove out from there the three sons of Anak: Sheshai and Ahiman and Talmi, the children of Anak. Josh 15:14 We all have giants in our lives. Perhaps it is a difficult person or circumstance, but there are times that suddenly God seems very small compared to what we're going through. Maybe we don't trust God because of our own sin, and not because we believe Him to be powerless. I remember a statement a drill sergeant made during the first week of basic training: "This will not last forever." At that point, he sounded like a liar. Time passed so slowly and I thought I'd be there the rest of my life. Looking back now, I realize he was right. What seemed like a giant obstacle has long since entered the rear-view mirror of my life.

We saw recently that 85 year-old Caleb wanted to still be used by God as long as he was alive. What you might have missed is that the territory Caleb asked to have, was the same one he had spied out 40 years earlier. It was filled with giants (the children of Anak), but he was willing to take that on because he knew the Lord was fighting the fight. **What giants are you fighting right now? Is it a person who is causing you great difficulty? Is it a situation where your faith is being challenged or even made fun of? Is it a child who seems bent on making the wrong choices? Remember like Caleb did, that you're not alone. God is the God of the impossible according to the angel who delivered word of a virgin birth to Mary in Luke 1. So have you talked to God about it? Don't try to fix it in your power, but desire to be delivered through His.**

Read Joshua 16

But they did not drive out the Canaanites who lived in Gezer, so the Canaanites live in the midst of Ephraim to this day, and they became forced laborers. Josh 16:10 I have experienced a lot of people who are living with cancer. The disease itself seemed so harmless when I learned about it as a teenager. Basically it's just an overproduction of cells, and I remember thinking that surely you can't have too many cells. But, when those cells begin to release the equivalent of a toxin, and take energy away from vital organs, you suddenly have a very real problem. Cancer often grows inside of people and they don't know it until the day it changes their life. I have seen a few people that have quit treatment after a while, because there was going to be no quality of life left. However, I've never heard of someone giving up as soon as they hear. They want to fight it!

As human beings, we all suffer from a spiritual cancer...sin. I hope that as you read a chapter like Joshua 16 you look at a map in your Bible to at least get a sense of what is being discussed. However, the key is the final verse where we see that Ephraim does not drive out the enemy from amongst them. They knew the command to rid the land of the godless people, but they chose not to. We can't harbor or tolerate sin in our lives, but we must choose to fight it! If we know that we are infested with something that is contrary to our Lord and Savior, our only desire should be to defeat it. **Do you harbor sin? Is there something in your life that is clearly amiss when it comes to Jesus, but you refuse to deal with it? Perhaps you enjoy it too much, or think that it's too difficult to stop, or you need a plan to step-down from your sin, like a nicotine patch does. That's incorrect. If you are aware of sin in your life, stop it! Stop it right now! Every moment you make friends with the enemy, you are choosing worthlessness over worthiness and selfishness over selflessness. Neither of those traits are usable by God. You will be missing plans and blessings that He has for you. Simply be obedient.**

Read Joshua 17

For though it is a forest, you shall clear it, and to its farthest borders it shall be yours; for you shall drive out the Canaanites, even though they have chariots of iron and though they are strong." Josh 17:18 Have you ever heard of people who want "something for nothing"? Usually a word that's more commonly used for them is "cheap". I would have to admit to being a little cheap myself. I know what things should cost, and even finding a reasonable deal, I will often wait until I have talked myself out of the item altogether. It's not unusual for me to visit a store to buy something that I've determined I need (like new work clothes), and yet I'll walk out of the store having spent nothing and still needing something. It's an unreasonable hesitation, but that's how I roll.

The tribe of Manasseh worked in a similar mindset to mine. They were given one lot of land for them to settle and it didn't look sufficient. However, it was sufficient if they did the work that was needed. They were numerous and needed room and the land was large enough, if the tribe cleared a forest and drove out the people that God commanded them to. They thought this sounded like too much work, and they wanted something else. Working for the Lord often requires us to take steps that aren't comfortable, but are

entirely necessary. To leave the Canaanites would be disobedience, however they were willing to chose disobedience over paying the price to get what was theirs. **Are you willing to live with a little disobedience in your life? If you are, then you're willing to allow the Kingdom of God to sit idle. While Jesus was on the earth, He was the light of the world. Now that He has left, it is the responsibility of believers to carry that light. Often times it requires that we do things that are difficult, like witnessing to friends, family, or strangers door to door. Is the price of obedience too high, because we might have to fight for the truth and clear out some areas of our lives? I say no. If God called you to do something, then it's important. To leave a task undone that the Lord has given you, is sin.. Choose to do the work of the Kingdom.**

Read Joshua 18

So Joshua said to the sons of Israel, "How long will you put off entering to take possession of the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you? Josh 18:3 I have never had any particular problem with putting things off. During my last couple of years in college, I would often wait until the last few days to register for classes, so I could avoid standing in long lines. I was close to graduation and had taken all my required classes, so any class would work. However, sometimes because of my delay I didn't really get to choose a lot of fun classes and was often stuck with some pretty terrible classes so I could graduate. So I guess delay was a benefit in some ways, and a drag in others.

Of all the times to delay, claiming your inheritance in the promised land wouldn't seem to be a good one. These people have been wandering and fighting, but now that they're here, they just kind of sit around thinking they have all the time in the world. Joshua instructs them to map out the land to claim their inheritance and they finally comply. **Are you delaying something that God has for your life? Perhaps you've felt a call to share the gospel more, even to consider foreign missions. Or maybe you've had a sin struggle for a long time that you just need to face through the strength of God and remove from your life. When God moves us to be patient, we certainly should. God's patience and long suffering are well documented throughout the Bible. However, when God says move, you've got to go. The children of Israel had learned this lesson when they followed the pillar of cloud through the wilderness, stopping when it stopped, and going when it went. Don't delay the plans of the Lord in your life, and if He has instructed you to act, then in whatever that situation might be, do it for the Lord.**

Read Joshua 19

When they finished apportioning the land for inheritance by its borders, the sons of Israel gave an inheritance in their midst to Joshua the son of Nun. Josh 19:49 I don't mind waiting for thing. In youth ministry, I always got in line last when we went to McDonald's (a necessary evil of youth ministry, I assure you). My mindset was that if I'm last in line, then when I finish eating, everyone should be finishing eating. Getting in a line of youth and adults first is hard, but getting in last is pretty easy. Plus since I'm the

leader, I don't have to rush! I could have used my position to eat first, but that wouldn't be the best way to lead my group.

If there was anyone in Israel who seemed to deserve first dibs on the land, it would be Joshua. Joshua had been a faithful leader and seen Israel through difficult days. But, he waited until everyone was settled before receiving his portion in the midst of the people. This is the mark of a good leader, and a Kingdom-focused person, one who puts the needs of others first. **How are your priorities? Do you realize one of the best ways to serve is just to give others priority? Do you seek out the needs and wants of your spouse, and place them over your own? Do you put your kids request for your time above your desire to keep it for yourself? These are all ways to put others first in your life, and live the example of Christ. When He fed the 5,000, He was trying to find a place to rest and be AWAY from people for a while. But, He put others first and we have one of the most well-known miracles of His ministry. Do you put God first? Don't put your family or friends first, because that's not the example of Christ. Jesus was Father-focused more than anything. Put God first, and everyone else between Him and yourself.**

Read Joshua 20

These were the appointed cities for all the sons of Israel and for the stranger who sojourns among them, that whoever kills any person unintentionally may flee there, and not die by the hand of the avenger of blood until he stands before the congregation. Josh 20:9 There was a story a few years ago about a teacher who was accused of sexually abusing some of his students. The story gained steam and soon the teacher was fired and nearly driven from the city. Later it was discovered, that the allegations of the teenagers weren't matching up and were determined to be lies. However, the teacher's life was ruined. He was unable to be rehired and suffered as much from the accusation as if he had been found guilty.

We sure can be quick to condemn. We can't allow emotions to drive our decisions and reactions to situations. These cities of refuge were designed for just this purpose. In the event of an unintentional killing, a person could seek asylum until their case was heard. If it was clear the person was guilty of a crime, they would lose their protection, but if not, they were to be given refuge. **How are you at evaluating situations? Do you allow yourself to be driven by emotion, or do you check the facts? So many times people's lives are wrecked by false testimony, because we fail to listen. Is there someone you've condemned too quickly, or failed to listen to their side of the story? The standard set by Scripture is for reliable witnesses to bring about convictions. If you need to apologize to someone for not believing them or passing judgment too quickly, then do it.**

Read Joshua 21

And the LORD gave them rest on every side, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers, and no one of all their enemies stood before them; the LORD gave all their enemies into their hand. Josh 21:44 After spending so much of my life in school, it still feels a little weird to be out. I used to find myself with constant stress during my studies. Coming to the end of a term or semester usually included two papers I hadn't written yet, and three finals I didn't want to study for. The longest I've ever studied for a final didn't really happen until seminary when I spent hours studying for Greek. But, there is an incredible feeling when you finish that last final, or turn in that last paper. Relief! Christmas Break! Graduation! Whatever! A time of rest and relaxation was coming and you just felt better.

Israel certainly needed rest on every side. They had fought their enemies, and now spent a ton of time going through the process of dividing land and cities. The people then had to move into those cities and get settled, and now finally they have rest; not just from their enemies, but a time of personal rest. Do you see what brought about their rest? Obedience. Not perfection, because even under Joshua, Israel made mistakes. But, this generation of Israel is clearly more concerned about obedience than the one Moses led out of Egypt. **Do you desire rest? Our daily lives are insane. The busyness, expectations, and requirements on our time, even on children, is a sad declaration about modern life. Our time doesn't belong to us anymore, but to everyone else. The problem is that God isn't getting first dibs on our time. We make every concession to pull things off at work or home, but not for our Lord. Then we wonder where we can find "rest", but disobedience does not bring rest. Do you find yourself so concerned with failures, that you consider a life lived for Christ to be nearly impossible? The Bible says we should seek to be perfect as the Father is perfect, but seeking it means it's a continuous chase. The best way to honor the Father is through obedience. If you're obedient, He is happy with you, and you will find the rest that we all need.**

Read Joshua 22

"Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God and walk in all His ways and keep His commandments and hold fast to Him and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul." Josh 22:5 I don't know what's worse: the fact that paintball is on ESPN or that I watch it. Two teams of usually six, hide behind inflatable cover as they try to get the other team. They act like they're an army unit, and just look like a bunch of nerds. In most every situation, the reason someone gets hit by a paintball is that they weren't careful. Someone dodges from behind their cover and they just get pegged. The team that wins is usually the team that is more patient and careful, at least in paintball anyway.

We've come across the Reubenites and Gadites several times, and every time I'm impressed with them as people of their word. These were the people who were satisfied

to get land just across the river from the promised land, but promised Moses they would still fight in Canaan to help Israel defeat the other people. Now these families are living across the river and they build an altar. Only the chief priests were allowed to sacrifice on an altar that was for all Israel. However, when the priests arrive, they find out that the Reubenites and Gadites weren't even using the altar. It was a witness, essentially a reminder, that there was a God to be worshipped and obeyed, but they were still going to go through the priests to do it. Truly they had not forgotten the commands, and were careful in the reasons why they built the altar. **How careful are you in obeying the Lord? Do you try to come up with reasons why your sin is OK? When people try to justify their sin, they are not living a careful life before the Lord. Christians who are not careful to obey the Lord are as successful as impatient paintballers. The enemy is just waiting for us to jump out from behind the cover of God's protection through His Word. Don't justify your sin. Don't be careless and then look back and ask "Why did I do that?" Be obedient from the start by being careful.**

Read Joshua 23

But you are to cling to the LORD your God, as you have done to this day. Josh 23:8 You know what I hate about saran wrap? How wrappy it is. When I was growing up I had to rotate with my sister to clean the kitchen after supper. It never failed that there were leftovers that needed to be stored, and saran wrap to be used in covering it. I wasted a lot of wrap because I would get it out and it would start sticking to things and get all twisted up before I was able to use it. I was eventually able to get it done, but wasted a lot because of how quickly that stuff would cling.

God wants us to be spiritual saran wrap. Joshua said the people are to cling to God. Not just look for Him, or hang out with Him when they get the chance. We are to cling to Him, be constantly attached to Him, never separated. Sin separates us from God. If we're Christians it's not permanent, but it certainly hinders our ability to serve and love Him. And if you're not a Christian, you are certainly separated from God. **Do you cling to God? Are you constantly seeking to stay in constant fellowship with God? Or are you content to have moments where you cling to the wrong things? Often that saran wrap would just cling to itself, and in the same way, we often get a little stuck on ourselves instead of God. You put Him first, clinging to Him, and watch your life, even as a Christian, be different.**

Read Joshua 24

choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." Josh 24:15 I remember a wall hanging in our house growing up that had the end of this phrase "but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." However, that house was torn apart by divorce and caused a lot of hurt to a lot of people. Truly, wall hangings and scripture-a-day calendars do not make strong believers. They are as useful as church attendance in determining who is committed to Jesus. Despite the number of times this

verse has been referenced and preached, I still don't think people really get what it means. It means that our house honors God, as does everything and everyone in it.

Joshua was telling the people to put away idols, because already some of them apparently had been incorporating the false gods of their new land. These gods would sit prominently on a shelf in the home, and become part of that home. A Christian home is one where the entire home honors God. What kind of books are there in the house to read? What is on television in that home? How do people talk to one another in that home? Do you know why many kids seem to be so unconcerned with spiritual things? It's because parents are allowing two different worlds to exist: church and home. That does not build strong homes. **Who does your house serve? As a household, have you chosen Jesus as the focus of your home? Would people who come into your house know that? I don't mean by the pictures and wall hangings, but by the love, relationships, and conversations that exist in your home. Have you chosen to serve the Lord in all areas, and are you helping your kids to do the same? As Joshua challenged, choose this day. Stop walking a crooked line between godly things and worldly things, but chose a straight path directly in God's will.**