

Overview

Treasuring Christ Introduction	The book of Joshua continues the storyline of the Pentateuch. After Moses' death, God commissions Joshua to lead the Israelites into the land of Canaan by first crossing the Jordan River. As they begin their conquest of the Promised Land, God's Word and His presence are their source of guidance, comfort, courage and strength.
Treasure Story	Joshua 1:1-3:17
Treasure Verse	Joshua 24:15b
Treasure Point	<p>Middle School: God fulfills His promise to Abraham by leading the people into the Promised Land.</p> <p>High School: God's Word and presence grant us boldness to do the tasks He has given us.</p>
Teaching Activities	<p>Middle School: Who Came Next?, Promises of God</p> <p>High School: Bible Relay</p>
Supplies Needed	<p>Middle School: Pencils, Who Came Next Resource page, whiteboard, dry-erase marker</p> <p>High School: Two inflated beach balls, two blindfolds, masking tape</p>
Prayer Points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask God to make you and the people of your church more like the blessed man in Psalm 1:1-3. Pray that God will help you make His Word a priority. • Pray that God will protect you and your church from wandering away from the Scriptures. Pray that you will be a people who not merely hear the Word but do what the Word says (James 1:22-24). • Pray that God's presence will be a powerful source of contentment in your life so that you are set free from slavery to other passions (Hebrews 13:5).

For Your Edification

Enter the Story

The famous 17th century philosopher Francis Bacon once said, “Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested; that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention” (*The Works of Francis Bacon*, Vol. 12, pgs. 252-253). What sort of book is the Bible? Is it a book to be tasted or one to be fully digested? In today’s lesson, we will see that the Bible repeatedly refers to itself as an object of meditation and a source of joy. Through God’s charge to Joshua—the new leader of Israel—we will also discover how the God of the Bible chooses to dwell among us and give us courage.

The Bible is typically divided into two main parts: the Old and New Testaments. In Hebrew, the Old Testament is often called the *TaNaK*. In this acronym, the “T” stands for *Torah*, which is the Pentateuch. The “N” stands for *Neviim*, which consists of the books known as “the Prophets.” And the “K” stands for *Ketuvim*, which are the books of the Bible called “the Writings.” The section of the Prophets (*Neviim*) begins with the book of Joshua, and we will study Joshua for the next few lessons.

The book of Joshua begins where the Pentateuch left off—with the death of Moses (Deuteronomy 34:5; Joshua 1:1). Earlier in the Pentateuch, Moses had stood on top of the mountain of Abarim (also known as Mount Nebo) and surveyed the land of Canaan from a distance. There the Lord told Moses that he would not lead the people into the Promised Land because of his sin; Moses would instead die east of the Jordan River. Moses asked God to “appoint a man over the congregation . . . who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the LORD may not be as sheep that have no shepherd” (Numbers 27:16b-17). God chose Joshua, the son of Nun, and gave him the same authority he had given Moses (Numbers 27:18-20).

Who was this man the Lord had chosen to lead Israel into the Promised Land? Joshua was first introduced to the reader as a military commander who defeated the Amalekites and then as a close companion of Moses. Ever since his youth, Joshua had been with Moses and had even went up Mount Sinai with him (Exodus 24:13). Joshua was also one of the twelve spies sent into the land of Canaan. Of all the spies, only Joshua and Caleb brought back a positive report (Numbers 13-14). Thus, out of the older generation, only these two men were allowed to enter the Promised Land (Numbers 14:38, 26:65).

Before the people could enter the land, however, they needed to cross the Jordan River. This crossing was a huge undertaking. During that time of the year, the riverbanks were overflowing because of the rains and melting snow on the nearby mountains. Despite the danger, God gives these instructions to Joshua: “Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel” (Joshua 1:2b). With these words, the Lord commissions Joshua after the death of Moses. He also encourages Joshua with reminders of His presence and promises (1:3-9). After he is commissioned, Joshua takes command of the people and sends out two spies into Jericho (1:10-18, 2:1-24). After the spies return with a positive report, the people of Israel miraculously cross the river on dry ground (3:1-17).

In today’s Treasure Story, we learn that God’s Word and His presence are not only unrivaled guides for Joshua

and the people, but for us as well.

Take a Closer Look

The book of Joshua continues the storyline that began in the Pentateuch. God made mankind to dwell in a good land (Eden) where we could worship and obey Him. When Adam and Eve rebelled, God exiled them. But He promised an offspring who would one day bring them back into a good land. God later promised Abraham that He would give his offspring a good land (Genesis 12:7). Abraham's descendants (the Israelites) were enslaved in Egypt, but God delivered them to bring them into the land of Canaan (the Promised Land). They failed to enter the land because of their unbelief and died in the wilderness—except for Joshua and Caleb (Numbers 26:65). The book of Joshua tells the story of the next generation of Israelites crossing over into the land (Chapters 1-5), taking the land (Chapters 6-12), dividing the land (Chapters 13-21), and serving the Lord in the land (Chapters 22-24).

As Joshua leads Israel into the land of promise, God's Word and His presence provide guidance, comfort, courage and strength. The Israelites are finally ready to take possession of the land that God promised them, and His Word and presence are critical to their success. Their destination—the land of Canaan—is a symbol of the heavenly rest that God will give believers (Hebrews 4:8-11). Our journey, like theirs, is guided by God's Word and His presence.

Meditating on God's Word

At the beginning of today's Treasure Story, God commissions Joshua to lead the people and reminds him of the centrality of His Word. God commands him, "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success" (Joshua 1:8). Notice that it is not mere reading that God demands of Joshua; He doesn't call Joshua to have a passing acquaintance with the Scriptures. Joshua instead is called to meditate on "all that is written in it."

Like Joshua, we also should meditate on the Word of God (Psalm 119:99, 148). The word "meditate" means to muse over something or to think over it on a deeper level. As we pour over the words of the Bible, we should ponder and prize God's voice. God wants us to chew on His Word so that we enjoy its sweetness and are strengthened by its nourishment. As we meditate on His Word, we are thinking His very thoughts. In life, we demonstrate our love for others by listening to them. As believers, we demonstrate our love for God's Word in the same way (Psalm 119:97, 113, 159, 167).

As Joshua prepares to lead the people and conquer the land, God points him to His Word for strength, courage, wisdom, and success (Joshua 1:8-9). Joshua's responsibility, therefore, is to meditate on the words that God provides him. The purpose of meditating on God's Word is obedience: "so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it" (Joshua 1:8b). The Scriptures were written down for our instruction and delight and to give us hope (Romans 15:4). God's Word gives new life to believers, makes us wise, revives our souls, and gives us understanding (Psalm 19:7; 119:93, 130; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23). Through His Word, God produces faith, hope, obedience, and joy (Psalm 19:8, 119:49; John 20:31). What other object of meditation can provide these blessings?

In addition to its many other benefits, God's Word gives hope to sinners in need of grace. Through His Word,

God invites His enemies to be reconciled to Him through His Son (Romans 5:10-11). God speaks to us through His Word to teach, reprove, correct, and train us in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16). The Word of God is the sword of the Spirit by which He cuts through the lies of sin (Ephesians 6:17; Hebrews 4:12). God's perfect guide for Joshua and His people as they enter the Promised Land is His Word. As His Word guided them, God's Word will guide us across the Jordan of this world to our home in heaven.

Enjoying the Presence of the Lord

The God of the Bible is no distant deity. Yahweh's Word is not the only help He promises to Joshua—He gives Joshua His presence. God reassures Joshua by saying, "Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you" (Joshua 1:5b). God can give no greater comfort than to supply us with His omnipotent and loving attention: "Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9b).

The people of God commit to follow Joshua as long as God is with him (Joshua 1:17). Throughout the book of Joshua, God makes it clear to the Israelites that He is with their new leader, just as He was with Moses. They can trust and follow Joshua because God is with him. Just as Moses led the people through the Red Sea, Joshua will lead the people through the Jordan. As Israel prepares to cross the Jordan, God tells Joshua, "Today I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you" (Joshua 3:7b).

Numerous parallels between the stories of the Pentateuch and Joshua's story make it apparent to the reader that God has not left His people. The chart below describes some of these striking parallels:

The Stories of the Pentateuch

The Israelites cross the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21-22).

Blood marks the doorposts (Exodus 12:13).

Midwives save the Israelite males (Exodus 1:17-19).

Moses' mother saves him by hiding him in reeds from the king (Exodus 2:3).

God rewards the midwives (Exodus 1:21).

Moses sends twelve spies in the land, and two of them return with a good report (Numbers 14:6-9).

Moses meets the angel of the Lord in the burning bush before leading the people out of Egypt. He is given this command: "Take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5b).

Moses must circumcise his son before the exodus (Exodus 4:24-26)

Moses and the Israelites celebrate the Passover before the exodus (Exodus 12).

Moses holds up his hands until all the Amalekites are defeated (Exodus 17:11-13).

The Book of Joshua

The Israelites cross the Jordan River (Joshua 3:7-17).

A scarlet cord marks the house of Rahab (2:7-20).

Rahab saves the Israelite spies. (2:3-9)

Rahab saves the spies by hiding them in stalks of flax from the king (2:6).

God rewards Rahab (6:25).

Joshua sends two spies into the land, and they return with a good report (2:24).

Joshua meets an angel of the Lord near Jericho before he leads the people into the land. He is given this command: "Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy" (5:15b).

Joshua must circumcise the Israelites before the conquest (5:2-8).

Joshua and the Israelites celebrate the Passover before they enter the Promised Land (5:10).

Joshua holds up his javelin until all the Canaanites at Ai are defeated (8:26).

After God gives them victory, the Israelites disobey God in the wilderness (Numbers 14).

Moses prays for the people after their failure (Numbers 14:13-16).

After God gives them victory, the Israelites disobey him (7:1-5).

Joshua prays for the people after their failure (7:7-9).

The parallels between the stories are astounding. The God of the Pentateuch does not change; He remains faithful. Just as He led His people out of Egypt, so He will continue to guide them in the Promised Land. The promise in Deuteronomy 31:6-8 is not just for Joshua—it is for all of God’s people. Just as God accompanied Israel on the journey out of Egypt to the Promised Land, so God will accompany those who trust in Him on their journey to their heavenly rest.

The promise of God’s presence is no small matter. It requires great sacrifice. As we learned in our study of Numbers, God’s holy presence could not dwell among sinful people. Atoning sacrifices were necessary to cleanse the people of their sin. In the book of Joshua, the Israelites must still use care while being in the presence of the holy God (Joshua 3:4-5). Yet God does not wait for sinners to cleanse themselves in order to dwell with them; we would never be clean enough. We need someone who is perfect and powerful who can do for us what we are incapable of doing for ourselves. Jesus looked upon us in our filthy and rebellious condition and chose to serve us by offering Himself up on the cross. By His sacrifice, we have been cleansed from the guilt and defilement of our sin (Hebrews 9:13-14, 13:12). His death and resurrection secure God’s abiding presence for all who trust in Him, and He gives His Spirit to His people as a guarantee of the inheritance we will one day receive (Ephesians 1:13-14).

The promise of God’s presence is an antidote to a myriad of sin’s deceitful promises. The author of Hebrews offers encouragement to believers by quoting God’s promise to Joshua: “Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you’” (Hebrews 13:5). Why should we keep our lives free from the love of money? Why should we be content with what we have? Because *God is with us*. If we are content with what we have, then we will not lust after money or any other material possession. Our contentment should rest in the presence of God because He is a better treasure than anything. If we prize communion with the Lord, the Bible says we will not be vulnerable to the temptations of unworthy, substitute gods.

In the next few lessons, we will see that God’s Word and His presence eventually lead the Israelites to conquer the Promised Land. Those who listen to and obey the Lord will rest safely on the other side of the Jordan. As those who trust in Christ, our lives are to be marked by a sincere devotion to God’s Word and a sweet communion with His abiding presence as we too journey to our heavenly rest with Him.

Gospel Truths / For Your Edification Continued

Gospel Truths About God

Our immortal and invisible God is way beyond our ability to know Him (1 Timothy 1:17), but He has chosen to reveal Himself through His written Word. The Word of God teaches that He is our Creator and King. He enables us to dwell in His presence and to worship and obey Him. God desires for us to know and enjoy Him.

Gospel Truths About Man

We have all rebelled against our Creator and King. We have been cast away from His good presence, just as

Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden of Eden. Our sin against God makes us unholy and worthy of punishment. In our fallen condition, we resist God's Word and shun His presence. Often our meditations and delights are in things not worthy of our attention.

Gospel Truths about Redemption

The Creator God came in the person of Jesus Christ to save rebellious sinners. Jesus died on the cross to bear the penalty of our sins. God raised Him from the dead and seated Him in heaven as ruler of the universe (Ephesians 1:20-21). All those who trust in Jesus are forgiven and reconciled to God. Jesus grants them His Spirit and leads them into the Promised Land of heaven. Those who trust God delight in listening to His voice and reading or hearing His Word. They enjoy His presence as they sojourn on earth.

For Your Edification (continued...)

- Psalm 1:1-3
- Psalm 19:7-11
- Psalm 119:103
- 2 Timothy 3:16-17
- Matthew 4:4b
- James 1:21-24
- Hebrews 4:12-13
- Psalm 118:5-9
- 1 John 4:4-6
- 1 John 3:23-24
- Romans 8:31-34

Preparing My Heart:

What has your attention on a day-to-day basis? What do you look forward to each day? What do you meditate on and delight in? What do you turn to for comfort? What kind of joy do those things provide? Does the Word of God offer you more or less comfort than the things of this world?

Think of a person you enjoy spending time with. Why do you find this person's company so enjoyable? What about God makes you seek His presence? Is there anything more valuable or more precious than spending time with your loving Heavenly Father?

When you think of meditating on Scripture and communing with God, do you think, "I need to do better"? If so, remember the Gospel. We are not made acceptable to God by our own striving to do better, but by the precious blood of Jesus. Jesus died to make us acceptable to God. We can admit to God our aversion to listening to Him and asking for His help. Jesus died to reconcile us to God, knowing that our works would never bring reconciliation. Through His sacrifice, Jesus gives us the ability to abide in Him. When the time comes, we too can cross the Jordan to our heavenly home because of what Christ did on the cross.

My Mission As Teacher

This lesson begins our study of the second portion of the Old Testament. It will be helpful to review the broad story of the Pentateuch before diving into the book of Joshua. Remind your students of Moses' death and explain

that Joshua was the next leader to take charge of the Israelite people. Use the parallels between the Pentateuch and Joshua's story to highlight the continuity of the Bible's storyline and the continued faithfulness of God.

Emphasize the role of Scripture and God's presence in His charge to Joshua. Show your students that the Bible repeatedly refers to itself as an object of meditation and a source of joy. Encourage your students to find comfort in the reality of God's presence.

Be sure to explain how the Gospel addresses our unwillingness to listen to God's Word. The death and resurrection of Jesus cleanses us of our guilt and changes our inclination toward God's Word and His presence.

Teaching Plan

Engage

High School: Group Fellowship Time

(10 minutes)

Supplies Needed: Two inflated beach balls, two blindfolds, masking tape

Bible Relay

Teacher Note: Prior to class, designate the relay area by creating parallel lines of masking tape at both ends of the room. The students will be divided into two teams, so you will mark off two starting lines at one end of the room and two additional lines of tape on the opposite end of the room.

Begin this activity by appointing two students to be the judges. Give them inflated beach balls and blindfolds to hold. Then divide your class into two groups. The groups should line up behind the starting lines. Ask the two judges to stand beside each team.

When the game starts, the judge for each team will tie a blindfold around the first student's eyes and give him the beach ball. The student will then race to the line at the opposite end of the room and return. The team members will verbally guide their players.

When the student returns, the judge repeats the process with the next student. A point is scored each time the beach ball returns to the team, and the team that scores the most points in five minutes wins.

Point out that finding your way is difficult with your hands bound and eyes blinded. Living by the Spirit can also be difficult. Not knowing the Bible can tie your hands when you deal with struggles, and it can cause you not to see clearly. In today's Treasure Story, the students will see how Joshua was instructed to value, know, and meditate on God's Word. The students will also learn the importance that God's Word played in Israel's next step.

Discover

High School: Bible Study

(30 minutes)

Teacher Note: Today's Treasure Story marks several major transitions. Joshua 1-3 is the first narrative after the Pentateuch. In this passage, Joshua has now taken over for Moses. After traveling in the

wilderness for 40 years, the Israelites are about to enter the Promised Land. Today the students will see how God equipped Joshua with boldness that came from His Word and His presence. They will also learn about God's sovereign control over every circumstance and the life-changing power of faith.

The Word of God offers guidance, comfort, and courage to those who meditate on it. Moses had died, and Joshua was given leadership of Israel. Joshua may have wondered how he could be confident in his leadership of all the people. The answer rested in his reliance on the Word that God had given Moses. Yet God did not call Joshua to simply read the Word; He instead exhorted him to “meditate on it day and night” (Joshua 1:8). To meditate is to dwell on God's Word, living and breathing it. Joshua was to dig deeply into the Word, apply it to his circumstances and find joy and pleasure in it.

The intended result of following the Word is obedience to God. In other words, when the people obeyed God's Word they were obeying God Himself. God told Joshua that he was to be “careful to do according to all the law” that Moses had commanded him (Joshua 1:7). Obedience to God's Word yields faith, hope, and joy (John 20:31; Psalm 119:33, 49). Joshua was not to render a dry, lifeless obedience; he was to value the Word and not let it depart from his mouth (Joshua 1:8).

Is the Word as valuable to you as it was to Joshua? Read and discuss the following passages about the Word of God: Psalm 1:1-3, 19:7-11, 119:103; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Matthew 4:4; James 1:21-24; and Hebrews 4:12-13.

God's presence also guides those who follow Him. In addition to God's Word, His presence guided Israel to the Promised Land. God uniquely promised to Joshua, “Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you” (Joshua 1:5). God then faithfully led Joshua, prompting him to make wise decisions and to guide the nation correctly. Joshua obediently followed.

Though we typically do not have God's audible voice to guide us, we do have access to the presence of God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit empowers change in our lives. He illuminates our eyes to understand the Word. The Spirit also gives us the strength to grow closer to God and to enact change in the world around us.

The ability to have the Holy Spirit living inside us was purchased at a great price—through Jesus' death and resurrection. Do you properly value and rely on the Holy Spirit residing within you? Read and discuss the following verses: Psalm 118:5-9; 1 John 3:23-24, 4:4-6; and Romans 8:31-34.

Because of God's Word and presence, we can be “strong and courageous” in the tasks God has entrusted to us. Joshua was facing daunting odds. He was replacing a legend to his people and leading an enormous community that had been without a home for 40 years. He would soon face difficult armies in the new land. On his own power and wisdom, he would fail. But God commanded Joshua to be “strong and courageous” three times in Joshua 1:6-9, and the people of Israel reiterated this command to him in Joshua 1:18. God was with him, and as a result he could find strength and courage. This courage, however, was not based on Joshua's abilities or his good deeds. Rather, God was telling Joshua that if he relied on the Torah (God's commands given to Moses) and listened to His voice, he did not have to fear the upcoming battles. God was fighting for him.

As followers of God, our tasks are not the same as Joshua's. But they are no less important. For example, God has commanded us to love Him with all our being (Matthew 22:37), to not be conformed to this world (Romans 12:2), and to make disciples (Matthew 28:19). On our own power, these tasks are insurmountable. But once again, God is with us—both in His Word and through the Holy Spirit. Thus, we

too can be “strong and courageous.”

Do you rely on God’s strength and courage when you face temptation, doubt, or fear? Read and discuss the following passages: Psalm 27:14; Proverbs 28:1; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Ephesians 6:19-20; and 2 Timothy 1:7.

God’s sovereignty should make us more thankful and humble. Whenever the narrator refers to the Promised Land in this Treasure Story, he talks about it as God’s gift: “the land that the LORD your God is *giving* you to possess” (Joshua 1:10, emphasis added). The narrator is emphasizing that the people did nothing to earn this land. God was in control the entire time.

It would have been tempting for the Israelites to say that *they* won the land or that *they* defeated the Egyptians. Yet Joshua knew that God deserved complete glory for their victories, and Israel was only inheriting the land because it was God’s will. We often give ourselves credit for what God has done—whether it is with athletic accomplishments, good grades, musical abilities, or other talents. But God is the true source. To take credit for what He has done in our lives is to rob God of His glory.

In what ways do you rob God of His glory? In what parts of your life do you need to give God complete glory? Read and discuss the following passages: 1 Corinthians 10:31; Ephesians 4:11-12; and James 1:17.

God can change the lives of even the most unexpected people. Rahab was an unlikely hero. First of all, she was from the enemy town of Jericho and a prostitute. She was also a woman, which meant she had low social status in her culture. Yet despite these apparent strikes against her, she showed extreme faith by putting her life on the line to help the Israelite spies. Not only did she help them, she declared that the God of the Israelites was the true God (Joshua 2:11). This bold faith landed her in the “hall of faith” in Hebrews 11:31.

Rahab is a stark reminder that God can save and use people we least expect. He calls people from all walks of life. The beauty of the Gospel is that because of Jesus’ death and resurrection, all kinds of people, even the darkest of sinners, can be reconciled to God—including you and me.

Do you really, practically believe that God can and will save any kind of person from all walks of life? If so, how should this truth impact the way you share the good news? Read and discuss other examples of unlikely people changed by the Gospel: Matthew 9:9-13; Acts 22:1-21; and 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

Joshua’s emergence as leader of Israel teaches us that God’s Word and His Spirit guide, comfort, and strengthen His people. As a result, we too can be “strong and courageous” to do the tasks God has entrusted to us. Moreover, Israel’s encounter with Rahab shows us that God can change the lives of people we would least expect.

Treasure

High School: My Mission

(10 minutes)

- Having God’s Word and His presence through the Gospel is a wonderful privilege. We literally have access to the words and Spirit of the one who created and sustains the universe. How would your life be different if you relied more on God’s Word and His presence? Would your friends and family members notice a change?
- God is in complete control over everything including our gifts, talents, and successes. How can you fully acknowledge God’s sovereign control over your successes to better give Him glory?
- God has given us everything we need to accomplish the tasks He has for us. How can you be “strong and courageous” as you share the Gospel with others (Joshua 1:9)?

High School: Prayer Time

(10 minutes)

- Praise God for His Word and His presence.
- Ask Him to help you to embrace both with joy.
- Thank God for every good gift in your life and give Him glory for things for which you take credit.
- Ask God for Spirit-empowered strength to fulfill the tasks He has given all believers and also ask Him to reveal other Rahabs in your life—those unexpected people who are ripe for the Gospel.