

**JOSHUA  
DEVOTIONAL**

By Pastor Phil Emerson

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

## OUR DISCIPLESHIP FLOW

At Emmanuel Church, we are passionate about living out the call to be disciples of Jesus Christ, and make it our goal to see His Kingdom come in our lives and the world in which we live. We recognise that in Biblical times, a disciple was someone who followed a teacher or rabbi, not simply to gain head knowledge to pass an examination, but to be fully immersed in the life of the rabbi, and *learn his ways*, so that they in turn could replicate this to the world around them. As Christians, we are now those who have been invited to 'follow' Jesus and all of His ways, and we therefore call ourselves His disciples.

*"This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did." 1 John 2:5,6*

We therefore want to take seriously the words of Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20 to make disciples and also commit to an ongoing journey of teaching and discipleship together.

We all have differing personalities and learning styles. At Emmanuel, we recognise this diversity within the church body and therefore desire to support and journey together as we relate with God and each other in some of the following environments:

- **Public (20+)**

In the Bible, we see Jesus seeking to make disciples as He engaged with larger numbers of people, e.g., His interaction with the crowds (Matthew 4:25; Luke 14:25), and the 72 (Luke 10:1-24).

At Emmanuel, we want to use each of our **larger gathered environments** as an opportunity to make disciples, e.g., **Sunday services**, **Friday Youth/Kids'** environments, **men's/women's** gatherings.

- **Social (10-15)**

Jesus demonstrated the necessity for **smaller accountable relationships** as an essential part of the life of a disciple. He did this by teaching and doing life with his twelve disciples (e.g., Matthew 10).

At Emmanuel, small accountable relationships are offered through:

**Lifegroup 12s**

These are **gatherings of 10-15 people** who meet bi-weekly in homes or around specific interests, e.g., crafts, football.

- **Personal (2-5)**

As well as having smaller accountable relationships amongst His twelve friends, Jesus also seemed to go to even deeper levels of trust with three in particular – Peter, James and John (Matthew 17; Mark 9). At Emmanuel, we seek to do this through:

**Lifegroup 3s**

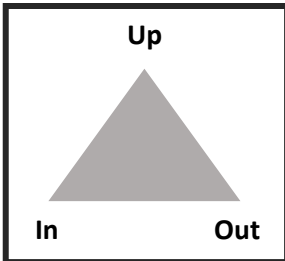
These are smaller **gatherings of 2-5 people** who are committed to transparent and accountable relationships in order to grow together in following Jesus. The aim for these groups is that after 1-2 years, each person in the group would be able to lead a smaller number of people themselves and replicate the process... **disciples making disciples!**

- **Intimate (1-1)**

Jesus regularly withdrew to spend time alone with the Father. This is the ultimate goal of discipleship, that each member of our church family would increasingly spend time alone with the Father and grow in devotion and desire to see the Kingdom come.

## A TOOL TO USE

As stated previously, 1 John 2:6 makes it clear that for those of us who call ourselves disciples of Jesus, our goal should be to daily *walk in the ways of Jesus*, our Rabbi. As we examine the New Testament we see that Jesus lived His life based on three relationships: **Up** – with His Father; **In** – with His chosen followers; **Out** – with the hurting world around Him. This is illustrated in the following triangle:



Jesus *taught* and *modelled* out to His disciples how to live into each of these areas in life.

### Up

Jesus frequently left the disciples to spend personal time with the Father (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16). He taught them the significance of prayer, and how to pray and communicate with the Father (Luke 11:1-13). When comparisons with one another or insecurities presented themselves, He spoke into it in love and challenged them into a greater depth of living (Mark 9:33-37; Matthew 18:1-5).

### In

Jesus had significant relationships with others in which He intentionally invested (12s and 3s). When He went to engage with the Father He brought the three with Him (Matthew 17:1). He taught them and modelled out the significance of Sabbath and rhythms of rest (Mark 6:31). He demonstrated with His life the significance of generosity and sacrificial love for others (John 13:1-17).

### Out

Jesus personally lived a life that engaged with the crowds and the broken world around Him. He healed the sick (Matthew 8:1-4), fed the poor (Mark 6:30-44), and cast out demons (Matthew 8:28-34). But with the people who were closest to Him, He challenged them to do the same (Mark 6:37), and when they took risks themselves He critiqued and gave honest feedback to call out more for them (Luke 10:17-20).

As we spend time alone or together in this devotional, we want to help and encourage you to engage in each of these ways – UP, IN, and OUT.

# HOW TO USE THE BOOK

## First

If you haven't already done so, please take a second to fill in your name on the inside of the front cover. There'll be a lot of identical books floating around, and we don't want yours to get lost.

## Prepare

Get ready for each session by spending some time to invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you. The Bible is a written word (logos), which becomes a living word (rhema) as the Holy Spirit breathes upon it and speaks directly to our lives through it.

## Commit

Commit to the journey. Discipleship is not a commitment to a moment, but to a lifetime journey. As you personally commit to journeying with God daily, commit to others by sharing what you are learning (possibly in Lifegroup 12s or 3s), and in this way encouraging one another in what God is saying.

## Reflect & Respond

Each day, as you spend personal time with God, we encourage you to ask the following two questions:

- 1) What is God saying to me?
- 2) What am I going to do about it?

**This is how we become doers and not just hearers of what God is saying.**

## INTRODUCTION TO JOSHUA

The book of Joshua is the story of God making good on His promises. It tells how Israel entered and conquered the land God had promised them. In fact, God's faithfulness is so complete that at the end of the book we hear this proclamation: *"You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the LORD your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed."* (Joshua 23:14) Can we count on God to keep His promises? The answer from Joshua is a resounding "Yes!" God is utterly dependable and we can trust Him completely.

Joshua is a book for those whose prayers seem to go unanswered, for those who wonder if God is really alive and active, and for those who desire fresh assurance of God's dependability. The book of Joshua picks up the story of Israel's history after the death of Moses and carries it through the entry, conquest, and division of the Promised Land. This is the story of Joshua stepping into his call. It makes me ask myself a question: how do I react when faced with something I feel totally unqualified to do? Whatever that may look like for you or me, on the strength of this incredible book, I can tell you this: God is worthy of all our trust!

Bible, journal, pen, and a cuppa, and off we go for another adventure. We are entering a new land in this adventure, so prepare yourself!

Love and prayers,  
Phil

**Live**

This is a class book. I called it an *adventure* in the intro and that's exactly what it is. The book begins with the children of Israel camped on the east of the River Jordan, right at the Promised Land. Only thirty-nine days ago Moses had left camp, never to return. He climbed the mountain one last time to render himself into the hands of the living God. Thirty-nine years ago, after receiving the law from God at Sinai, the fathers and grandfathers of these people had stood at this very place on the verge of the Promised Land, but they had failed to enter. As a result, God turned them back to wander for forty years and a whole generation had been wiped out. Now the only people over forty were Joshua and Caleb.

Joshua was the new leader and was commissioned by God Himself to lead these people into the Promised Land. Three times over in this chapter God tells Joshua to have courage and be strong, reinforcing his true call. This story is for me like a favourite holiday spot, like a favourite booth at a favourite restaurant, or like the chair I'm most likely to seek out at the end of a weary day; I like to visit it often. It reminds us of how God is faithful even when we are faithless, and loving when we are most unlovable. We can look forward to the day when God will never have to be patient or forbearing with us again, never need to be accepting of our immaturity – that day when we will cross over into glory to be forever with the Lord, changed into His likeness and beauty. We are never sillier than when we act like a spiritual orphan, as though His grace isn't sufficient. He is working all things together after the counsel of His will to make us like Jesus. Sometimes we just need to be set free from our foolishness and acknowledge that God is with us and for us even when we don't feel it. I love His grip of eternal grace on us, a grip that we can never loosen or lose.

**Pray**

Father, again I proclaim, You are the treasure of my heart, the deepest desire of my most intense longings, and the One who is alone worthy of all my affection and adoration – my portion today and forever. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.



**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

### Live

Thousands of years ago, God promised Abraham, *"I will make you into a great nation"* and *"to your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates"* (Genesis 12:2 / 15:18). These same promises were renewed with each generation of Abraham's descendants, but hundreds of years passed and his children still had no land to call their own. Even worse, they lived as slaves for four hundred years and wandered in the desert for forty years after that. But for Abraham's incredible faith, they hardly qualified as *"a great nation"*. In this chapter, we meet a woman of faith, a member of the only family in Jericho God allowed Israel to spare. Because of Rahab's faith, not only was her life spared, but God also extended to her the promises He had made to Israel. She became an ancestor of both King David and Jesus. Rahab is mentioned in James as an example of saving faith. She is also honoured in Hebrews 11, the great faith 'hall of fame'. Not bad for someone known throughout history as *"Rahab the prostitute"*!

As I read this chapter today, I am drawn to a New Testament passage – Colossians 3:15 *"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful."* Today, like every day, somebody or something is going to try to seize the passion and preoccupation of your heart. It could be bitterness, pettiness, or cowardice. It could be shame from the past or fear in the present. It could be our overbearing greed to have a little more or our need to be criticized less, the lusts of our flesh or the longings of our soul. Any number of things will clamour for the best of us. But right now, in submission to Paul's admonition, let us choose God's peace as the ruler of our hearts, as the centring and focusing power for this moment and day. No one is better at giving peace than Jesus, for He is the Prince of Peace.

### Pray

Father, may Your peace override the fears and stresses and disappointments which clamour for my energy. No matter what news I receive today, may Your peace be more obvious than my anxieties and uncertainty. Like Rahab, may my faith be set in You. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

The two spies returned from Jericho having followed Joshua's orders to check out the land. They had escaped capture with Rahab's help, and gave their report to General Joshua. Immediately he dispatched runners throughout the vast camp of Israel announcing that the next morning they would break camp and pitch their tents on the banks of the River Jordan. However, here's the scene ... the Jordan has swelled its banks, spreading about a mile across, ranging in depth from 3 to 12 feet, with a thick undergrowth that could easily trip someone up and cast them into an overwhelming current. The people spent the next three days at the banks of the Jordan, the passing torrent eroding all confidence. The waiting pounded reality into every Israelite. You can imagine the doubts voiced over night-time fires, 'What are we going to do? What about our children?' A scene is steadily drawn in their minds that this crossing won't happen.

But then, in verse 13, the moment of truth! The priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant had to step out into the flood waters and stand still right there! Consecrating yourself to the Lord is vital, but we will never cross the river unless we take that step of faith. We must commit ourselves – time, energy, money, everything – to what God is doing, or it won't happen. In standing still the priests were acknowledging that it wasn't their work that changed anything, it was God alone. The people had their eyes on the Ark positioned high on the shoulders of the priests who were wading in the shallows of the river. Everyone was ready, clean in heart and spiritually alert, watching for something that only God could do. The step of faith had been taken. Now the priests were standing still in the water and a great hush fell over the people. Someone noticed that the water was receding. It was dropping fast! Somewhere upstream beyond their sight the waters mounted up in a great crystal heap. Now that is one pretty cool miracle from a pretty cool God!

**Pray**

Father, this passage frees my heart today. Truly, there is no other God but You, full of mercy, grace, and kindness. You are the Father from whom all fatherhood derives its meaning. I love You. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

## Read

## Joshua 4

### Live

One can only surmise what these people felt as they finally stood in Canaan. Perhaps it was a bit like the first day on holiday; you have planned it, looked forward to it, read all about it, and now the time has come and you're there. When they crossed over, God gave a new command. Twelve men hoisted heavy stones to their shoulders from Jordan's floor and piled them together in the Promised Land. They were stacked there as a sign, an unmistakable marker at the very place where God had demonstrated His power to overcome any obstacle to His will. Seeing that rock pile and hearing the story, the people of Israel would be reminded that they had not crossed Jordan by their own efforts. Those stones cried out, 'We could never have done this on our own. Only God!'

It took one day to get the children of Israel out of Egypt, but forty years to get Egypt out of them. It reminds me of salvation; it is a moment in time but a lifetime of exploration and sanctifying. It is only by the Spirit of God that we even believe the gospel. He convicted us of our sin, gave us eyes to see Jesus and faith to trust Him. By the Spirit, we've been born again and are no longer dead in our sins and trespasses. We have new birth and new life in Jesus and yet there's so much more for which to be grateful. By the Spirit, God sealed us forever as His beloved people. He's the first fruits of our final redemption, the guarantee that one day we'll live with the whole family of God in the new heaven and new earth. He's the wedding ring wrapped around our heart, the sign and security of our betrothal to Jesus. It's by the Spirit we hear God telling us we are His beloved child, guilt and shame free. Oh, the joy of crossing over into this new and wonderful salvation. Maybe this is how the Israelites felt too!

### Pray

Father, thank You for the image of the Promised Land, that place You want me to inherit now on earth, a place where I work and walk with You. Enable me today by Your Holy Spirit to live as a child and not a slave. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

### Live

We fight many battles in life – financial, physical, emotional, and spiritual. The question poses itself to us, how can we be victorious in these battles, especially when the odds against us seem overwhelming? Conquering the Promised Land was an enormous task. It was huge and scary. Forty years earlier the Israelites had lamented, *"The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size ... we seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them"* (Numbers 13:32-33). Yet, in spite of these obstacles, Joshua and the people of Israel set out to conquer the first Canaanite stronghold, Jericho. As they do so, the Lord teaches them, and us, how to be victorious. In the midst of all that was going on Joshua slipped out unbeknown to anyone. He nears the city and is confronted by a man with his sword drawn. Joshua's first thought is, 'Whose side is this chap on?' But this soldier introduces himself as the commander of the Lord's army – a high-ranking official, most likely the preincarnate Jesus.

I love how Jesus turns up in the most significant of times. Joshua, feeling alone, a leader carrying much responsibility, encounters Jesus. Jesus comes and says, 'I don't take sides, I take over. Now follow Me.' I love this so much! What a joy it is to know the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. His mercies are new every morning and they are custom grace-shaped for every circumstance and trouble. Far from despising our cries for mercy, He delights in them. What a loving Father He is. Just as He wanted the best for these people as they were stepping into their rich inheritance in the Promised Land, so He wants the best for us. May our acceptance of His grace compel us unto multiplied expressions of grace towards others. As we have received His mercy may we pass copious amounts unto others. Freely we have received, freely give.

### Pray

Father, my greatest comfort comes from realising what You have done for me in Jesus. Because of Jesus, I am fully forgiven and declared righteous. Thank You today that You stand as the firm Deliverer of all You promise, more than I could ever imagine. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.



**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

Jericho was one of the oldest cities in the world. It was fortified by walls as wide as they were high, probably some twenty-five feet, wide enough to hold chariot races on the top. The guards could see for miles in every direction. Jericho was considered invincible and indestructible, so it is interesting that this very city was the first point of strategic attack for God's people. Conquering this city would put the fear of God's people into the heart of this nation right at the very start. It is safe to say that if Joshua had met with his military advisors, no one would have come up with this plan. God's plan of salvation and deliverance is not a plan that man would design. Today, people are prone to believe in a plan of salvation and sanctification that in some way introduces works into the equation rather than faith alone in Christ alone.

The walk of silence around Jericho each day was looked on with much scorn, but with God there are no mistakes. He led these people to victory and the walls fell. Some readings suggest that the ground opened and the walls disappeared into the ground so that the Israelites ran into the city on flat ground. This was a complete destruction. There was to be no plunder gathered as nothing could contaminate the purposes or the people of God. No personal gain was allowed, only a few things were taken for the house of God.

Rahab with her household were spared, according to the promise of the Lord to her. God is always faithful to His word and to His promises. Interestingly enough, this harlot would become a significant player in the lineage of Jesus Himself. You have got to love the grace and undeserved favour of Almighty God. By the way, the curse declared in verse 26 was actually fulfilled; you can read about this in 1 Kings 16:34.

**Pray**

Father, I live and sing in light of the day when all nations will come and worship before You. Great and marvellous are Your deeds, Oh Lord, full of mercy and overflowing with grace for me in Jesus. All of Your ways, in heaven and on earth, are just and true, for You are the King of kings. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

## Read

# Joshua 7

## Live

Success can lead to complacency. It is when we feel confident and in control that very often the 'suddenly' creeps up on us and the bottom drops out of our lives. Israel had tasted success; they had won an important battle against the nation's greatest stronghold. God was obviously with them, so conquering the small city of Ai would be a piece of cake, or so they thought! But their confidence collapsed when they attacked the city and were chased like a puppy trying to steal a dog's bone. What had gone wrong? Had God failed them? Why hadn't God kept His promise? It is such a lesson today that Joshua didn't consult God before going against Ai. He took it for granted that God would be with him. After all, He was with him in the past.

Thirty-six Israelite warriors died and they didn't realise it was because of Achan's sin. It makes me wonder how our sins might affect others. We need to continually be bringing any sin in our lives before God, confessing it to Him with a repentant heart. Achan's sin was a gross act of disobedience that affected the nation, hence the severity of the judgement. We all know that no one is as welcoming of sinners, as kind to the broken, or as understanding of the struggling as God. He is like the perfect surgeon, the one I would want to work on me if needed. He never gets nervous, flustered, agitated, or hurried but has a steady hand because He has a steady heart, and I for one gladly surrender to both today. We need to always keep our hearts right before this God whom we serve and love, especially when it comes to the area of habitual sin. He is not mocked and will chasten those whom He loves.

## Pray

Father, help me when Satan starts condemning me for things I actually did, but things for which You already paid my debt. Help me when it comes to listening to You and to Your words. Like Joshua, I can't afford to get it wrong as other's lives may depend on it. Make me a gentle person by the gospel for Your glory. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

### Live

At times, God must engineer defeat before He can engineer victory. Success can come through the back door of failure. I am reminded of a couple of verses in Psalm 119:67,72 *“Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep Your word.” “It is good for me that I was afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes.”* In this chapter we again see the grace of God and the truth of restoration. It is important to always remember that defeats never have to be the end. They may, in fact, be the beginning, if we will just respond to the grace of God as a loving heavenly Father who works to produce spiritual growth and Christ-like changes in us. However, this doesn’t minimise the consequences of sin. In the Ai incident, God’s name had been dishonoured and people lost their lives. The story of Ai is a message of warning; it reminds us that sin cannot be tolerated in the Christian life. Sin hinders the blessing of God, and sin grieves and quenches the Spirit. The story of Ai is also a proclamation of hope as it reminds us that blessing and productivity can come when sin is confessed and dealt with. Maybe a good question to ask yourself is this, ‘Is the Holy Spirit convicting me of anything today?’

I love the unparalleled joy we get in acknowledging that God is the Father we’ve always longed for and needed. Our most loving and engaged relationships have only been a wonderful hint of what it means to be His beloved child; they could never be to us what God alone can be. On the other side of the coin, our most broken and irresponsible relationships cannot rob our heart of the joy we find in knowing God and crying, “Abba, Father.” God adopted us as sons and daughters through the finished work of Jesus, freeing us from slavery to sin and from our orphan-like ways. He gave us the Spirit of sonship, a secure place in His family, and an inheritance that can never spoil or fade, kept in heaven for us. What a pure joy this is!

### Pray

Father, thank You for grace to acknowledge my failings as a person, and for promising me the strength I need to humble myself before others. Help me to trust You to write stories of redemption in my family and friends. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

## Live

I find this chapter baffling and encouraging all at the same time. Baffling in how Joshua could let these people pull the wool over his eyes. Encouraging in that I have made silly allegiances in my life too and it gives me hope to know these men of God slipped as well. If I could write one word over this chapter it would be 'deceived'. Satan's primary strategy is deceit and lies. He seduces us into believing that a lie is truth, that evil is good, that a suicidal plunge is a leap into life. He will feed you an ocean of truth just to slip you a spoonful of poison. Some good questions to ask today: Do you make a decision on your own or do you pray about it first? What tricks does Satan use to keep you from seeking God's guidance? In what areas are you tempted to make peace with a sinful world?

The words of heaven have an amazing power to centre our hearts when life seems out of control and events in the world unnerve us. What Joshua really needed here in this chapter is the same thing we need in the madness of our 21st century world – to be reminded about the God story. We need to remember our theology. We need to live in the gospel story! Let's remind ourselves today that the enemy goes about like a roaring lion and also like a subtle fox to deceive and cheat us out of our full inheritance. We need to centre our hearts around Jesus who has delivered us from sin and death into the glorious freedom of the children of God and who will yet deliver us into the ultimate land of freedom, the new heaven and new earth. May we all choose to live and sing in light of the day when all nations will come and worship before our God.

## Pray

Father, great and marvellous are Your deeds. All of Your ways, in heaven and on earth, are just and true, for You are the King of the ages. You alone are the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only true God, and to You be honour and glory forever and ever. Best of all, I get to call you my *Abba Father*. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.



**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

## Live

I love the integrity of this man Joshua. If I had been deceived by someone, I may have delayed in reaching out to help them, but not this boy, Joshua. We see in verses 6 and 7 his immediate response. This, of course, is how God demonstrates His faithfulness towards every believer. Even though we have sinned against Him in the past, He still strengthens us when we are weak, comforts us when we are suffering, and heals us when we are sick. He provides for all of our physical, emotional, and spiritual needs.

Joshua and Israel had miraculously crossed the Jordan and conquered the cities of Jericho and Ai, but in spite of these victories, they still needed to be reassured that God was with them. Do you ever wonder why it can be hard to trust God for the future even though He has been faithful in the past? In this chapter we read how God even supernaturally prolonged the day so that His people could seal the victory over their enemies. The *“book of Jashur”* was probably another book that recorded historic events at the time, a bit like the book of Josephus who was a historian at the time of Jesus.

May God teach us the wisdom of this chapter, that when we put our trust in Him, even the elements have to obey. After being deceived by the Gibeonites in chapter 9, Joshua is back trusting in a God who can make the sun stand still in the sky. May the Lord give us the proper perspective as we think about our relationship to Him. Maybe we have allowed a spirit of entitlement to go unchecked in our heart? It would seem this was the lesson Joshua had to learn. If we would wear ourselves out for anything, let it be for becoming rich toward the Lord, having the gospel so penetrate our heart that we can cry out with the psalmist, *“Whom have I in heaven but You? And earth has nothing I desire besides You.”*

## Pray

Father, thank You for Jesus who was outrageously rich in all things yet became incomprehensibly poor for me so that I, desperately poor in sin, might be made immeasurably rich in grace. This is my story and my song; may it be my lifestyle and my joy. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

## Live

There were two kings of Hazor called Jabin. One was a weak king, but not this boy. He was powerful and adept in getting other kings to join forces with him. Because of this, he totally outranked Joshua and the children of Israel in numbers. But then, when did numbers ever make any difference to God? I love these words from God, *“By this time tomorrow I will hand them all over to Israel as dead men.”* The attack from Jabin was new and more serious than previous challenges, so Joshua needed a fresh confirmation of God’s promise for his life and the Lord was faithful to bring it. *“Do not be afraid because of them,”* God says, meaning that fear was obviously an issue for Joshua and the people of Israel. God has a reason for everything He does and He would not have said, *“Do not be afraid”* unless there was a reason for the encouragement.

The key line for me comes in verse 16, *“Joshua did as he was told.”* Boom, there you have it! When we do as the King bids, then we have the King’s reward. I am reminded of the little verse in Hebrews 13:9, *“It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace.”* For surely, the more our heart is strengthened by grace, the more it will beat for God’s glory and long for His kingdom; also, the less likely we’ll run to broken cisterns and cling to worthless idols but rather lean into the mercy and forgiveness of Almighty God. As our heart is strengthened by grace just like Joshua and Moses before him, we will repent quicker, forgive deeper, and love more; we will think of others more than ourselves; we’ll be less inclined to nurse grudges and more inclined to overlook stuff in others.

When we hit the last verse, we see what power obedience and faithfulness have. Joshua took control of the entire land, just as the Lord had instructed Moses; it became the children of Israel’s special possession. What a mighty, faithful, uncompromising God we serve.

## Pray

Father, my heart cries out to You and with every ounce of energy declare, *“You are my rock and my salvation; who then will I fear?”* Indeed, it is good for my heart to be strengthened by grace. In Jesus’ strong and name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

This chapter marks halfway in the book and is a summary of all that has happened to date. Joshua's military strategy is quite amazing. He is obviously staying close to his Captain and Chief, listening to the still, small voice that guides and directs. The strategy was to gain a foothold in the land by first defeating its greatest stronghold, Jericho. Ai was much smaller, but with internal issues in the Israelite camp, it proved more difficult than first thought. Joshua then took the hill country around Bethel and Gibeon before moving into the lowlands to places such as Hazor. The challenges presented to Israel seemed to increase at each step. We often find that the challenges facing us in our Christian life increase along our journey too.

I love the title in my Bible for this chapter, *'The list of defeated kings'*. It made me open my journal today and start listing defeated things I have seen in my Christian experience. In Joshua's life, thirty-one cities and their kings had been defeated. As we list the great things God has wrought for us and in us, may it help us to bring that refreshing to others. May we, by His matchless grace, offer a refreshing presence in the lives of our family and friends.

These kings in today's passage didn't stand a chance against the power of God's people ... as long as God's people obeyed and followed hard after Him. Obedience is the key. The love of God is totally unconditional, but the blessings of God are conditional; we are reminded of this by the little word 'if' in 2 Chronicles 7:14, *"If My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land."* We cannot play fast and loose with God. Some people play off the Old Covenant against the New Covenant. Let's not misunderstand grace; it by no means allows us to live any old way we like.

**Pray**

Father, no matter what my imprisonments have been, You've broken my chains and taken away my shame. May I offer a refreshing taste of Your kindness to others today, no matter what their chains happen to be. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

We have travelled a long distance from chapter 1. Joshua is now an old man. This next little section from chapter 13 to 19 will show us how the land was divided up between the twelve tribes. God speaks to an old Joshua about the land remaining to be conquered and possessed. Even while acknowledging Joshua's advanced years, God still tells him about a job that needs to be done. No matter how much we have done in our Christian lives, there still remains much to do. There can be no satisfaction with a partial inheritance; God wants us to keep pressing on. What the land was to Israel, Jesus is to us. I love this. We are to possess all of Him, to keep pressing on to have all of Jesus. How much of Jesus do we have? How much of the Bible do we possess as ours? Do we walk in the blessing of leading others to Jesus Christ? Do we know the blessings of answered prayer and of meeting the needs of others in God's family? These are incredible questions for us.

As I write today, I am drawn to John 8:36, *"If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."* I'm sure we all agree that while God has freed us from the vain notion that it's possible to gain a relationship with Him by good works, we are still not as free as He would intend. May the Lord help us to use fewer words and more listening techniques when in the quiet place. May He unshackle us from the illusion of control and from a self-centred attitude in every area of our lives. May He liberate us from thinking about the next thing we need to do, so we can be present in the current moment, aware of what He wants us to do. May God break even more of the chains of our insecurities, and may we realise that, like Joshua, until we take our very last breath there is always kingdom work to be done.

**Pray**

Father, unfetter me from thinking too much about what I'm not. Show me more of You and who I am in You. In fact, help me to think about myself less often and think way more about Your glory, beauty, and perfections. Free me for greater spontaneity and quicker repentances. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.



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**Live**

The details of the division of land is pretty amazing as Joshua follows God's instruction to Moses to the very letter of the law. When God tells us to do something, it can be easy to do the things we like but not the things that irk us a bit. Obedience in *everything* is key.

Christians often feel more like captives than conquerors and it is important to ask, What hinders our spiritual progress? Why do we sometimes experience so little when we are promised so much? God had proven Himself to Israel throughout their many battles, He had promised to be with them in the conquest of Canaan and had kept His promise, yet in spite of many victories, much of the land remained to be conquered. These next few chapters look at why Israel failed to possess all that God had promised.

We come across Caleb today. I love this man. I love his loyalty, his longevity, his tenacity to hold on against all odds. He proves that age is but a number. At eighty-five years old he could say 'I'm still strong, I can travel and fight as good as ever. Now, give me the hill country that was promised to me so I can go and sort out those giants once and for all.' (My interpretation!)

There are times when the demands upon us seem to far outweigh the resources within us. In those times, the call to repentance and rest, quietness and trust, comes to us like a kiss from heaven. Oh, for the strength of a heart at rest in God today. Oh, for the courage like Caleb to possess the promise. We may not be facing the enemies Israel confronted in Caleb's day but we have our own enemies to fight and promises to claim.

**Pray**

Father, I repent of letting needs dictate my pace. I repent of trying to spin more plates than You intend. I repent of not honouring Sabbath rest. I repent of doing more things for You than spending unrushed time with You. I choose to wait for You. As You rise to show me compassion, I will sit down, shut up, be still, and let You reveal to me the promises You have given me to possess. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

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Again, let me highlight the precision of how the land was allocated. In the previous chapter, we read of the allotment of land to Caleb's tribe. In this chapter, the story of Caleb's final victory is tucked into the middle of a list of the borders and towns of Judah's heritage. I love this. Caleb did as he had said; he went and sorted out those sons of Anak. They were a race of giants, but that didn't matter to Caleb who knew that they would be but grasshoppers to his God, Yahweh. This former Gentile (Caleb was a Kenizzite) was recognised as a leader in Judah. This faithful man who submitted his life to the God of Israel and was incorporated into the covenant of God's people foreshadows the millions of Gentiles and Jews that would one day be united in the New Covenant in Jesus Christ. Just think today of how we were grafted into the vine as sons and daughters of the Most High God. We are heirs of God and joint heirs with Jesus Christ!

Take a moment and meditate on these words in 2 Corinthians 12:9,10. The Lord says, *"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."* Paul responds, *"Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong."* I wasn't taught to delight in weakness, but rather to despise, deny, and dethrone weakness. But, as Martin Luther says, "Bad theology is the worst taskmaster of all." Caleb went out in the power of his God knowing he was but a mere human being, yet having proven the faithfulness of God many times. Caleb had learned a life lesson – trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding!

**Pray**

Father, forgive my irritation, impatience, and avoidance of people whose need is greater than my supply. How I long to be a Caleb for You, Lord. Ever remind my heart that Jesus embraced the weakness of the cross so that I could freely boast in the weaknesses of my life and rest in the provision of Your grace and power. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

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**Live**

There is so much in this little chapter that I love. It is a bit of a head wrecker as well, which makes it a superb study. Every son of Jacob had a tribe named after him, except Joseph. ‘Why not Joseph?’ one may ask, and a good question it would be! Chapters 16 and 17 outline the territory of Joseph’s two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. They had been officially adopted by Jacob as his own sons, endowing them with status equal in every way to the other patriarchs. By this cute wee manoeuvre, Jacob gave the "double portion" (one of the blessings of the birth right) to Joseph, the oldest son of his favourite wife, Rachel, whom he loved so very dearly. Now, I know what you’re thinking! That would make thirteen patriarchs instead of twelve! I’m sure you’re way ahead of me on this. I was a bit slow, but then I realised that Levi did not inherit with the others. Because his was the tribe the priesthood would come from, the Lord was his portion.

It would be a good exercise today to think of your inheritance – not just the earthly one, but the one stored up for you. It would be good to pause for a few minutes and dwell on the words of 1 Corinthians 2:9, *“No eye has seen nor ear heard, nor has the heart of man imagined what God has prepared for those who love Him.”* This portion of the Word is like a bottomless ocean of grace, an endless horizon of mercy, a spring of eternal goodness; it underscores God’s glory and great love for us His children. His boundless mercy and grace give us undeserved favour and an inheritance which is incorruptible. Mercy and grace mean that the Father loves us as much as He loves Jesus, and there’s nothing we can do about it; we can’t add to it or take away from it. Mercy and grace mean that all of our sins – past, present, and future – are forgiven.

**Pray**

Father, thank You that I am enveloped in Your righteousness, fully and eternally acceptable to You. I’m guaranteed, one day, to be as lovely and as loving as You are. Passages like this one today show us Your undoubted sovereignty, which I love. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

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**Live**

Manasseh and Ephraim were large tribes and they complain that they have not been allotted adequate land, asking this question in verse 14, *“Why have you given us only one lot and one share to inherit, since we are a great people?”* Joshua’s reply is both wise and wonderful. He tells them, *“If you are a great people, then go and get the land for yourself; fully occupy what the Lord has given you.”* These tribes had not completely taken the mountain country in their midst because it was hard and dangerous work. How different their attitude is from Caleb’s attitude in chapter 14! They want ‘easy’ land instead of taking God’s promises and going out and fighting for what God has given them. The same principle applies just as strongly for us today. If we desire more of something, the first thing to do is to be faithful where we are. Makes me ask myself, am I faithful in the little things?

I love that Joshua put justice in front of tradition in giving land to the ladies, even though I’m sure he got some flak for this. Zelophehad had no sons, only five daughters, and so Joshua give the inheritance to them. While we are on the subject of inheritance, I’m so grateful for the incalculable riches of grace God has lavished on us, for planning such a magnificent salvation and for accomplishing all things necessary to redeem us completely. We search for adequate words to express our gratitude, but words fail us. The Holy Spirit faithfully impresses the Father’s love upon our hearts, incessantly telling us that we are His beloved children, a truth that fills us with confidence of an incorruptible inheritance. God has sealed us for the day of redemption so let’s not sadden or grieve Him by not fighting for what He has faithfully provided. Remember, we are called to build up, not tear down. So, rather than moan, looking for what is easier, why not muscle up and claim our rightful inheritance today!

**Pray**

Father, I praise You for sending Jesus to declare the word of final judgement on the cross that I might hear Him speak the words of complete welcome and acceptance in my heart. Jesus is, indeed, the most wonderful, merciful Saviour. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.



**REFLECT**

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## Live

This chapter kicks off with the entire assembly gathering at Shiloh. This was most likely the first permanent position for the tabernacle, making it easier for people to gather together during festival and worship times. This is the place Samuel was taken to as a small boy and the place he would return to often. The tabernacle would remain here throughout the reign of the judges, approximately three hundred years.

Can I add a personal note for a moment? On 7<sup>th</sup> June 2019 I stood in Shiloh, standing in the actual site where they deemed the tabernacle had been built with its door facing east towards Jerusalem. I lifted my voice at the place where the door would have been, called on the name of the Lord, and worshipped myself hoarse. An experience I will never forget.

When we get to verse 2 it is kind of weird in that now the land was under control, yet there remained seven tribes that had not yet received their inheritance. Why would they not want to possess their land? Why would Joshua need to prod them into their inheritance? There could be many reasons for this. Maybe it was because these were a people who, for more than a generation, had not lived in permanent dwellings and they were afraid of something new, even if it was good. They were a weakened nomadic people who seemed to have grown used to taking the road of least resistance. They did not fulfil what God had called them to do. Some questions for you and me today: Is there something I am afraid to move into? What is God calling me up and into that I am nervous of? Let's have one simple resolution in ourselves, that we will never allow ourselves to be robbed of God's best inheritance and promise for our lives. The old lie of the devil is, 'God's holding out on you.' Today, swipe away that lie and choose to open your eternal eyes to all God has promised.

## Pray

Father, help me to be unafraid of new territories in You even though they are uncharted waters for mankind. You are the Captain of the Host who ever goes before, behind, and all around. I love You and I love the way You love me. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

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**Live**

After the final allotments of land were given out, Joshua received what was promised to him. In remarkable humility, he receives his portion last. This is the kind of humble service and concern for others that makes Joshua such a great leader and a wonderful picture of Jesus Christ. Jesus said He didn't come to be served but to serve. This begs the question of us today – how can we serve our family, our community, our church, and our Saviour? Oh, that God would create in us a servant's heart and that He would help us to follow Jesus' example of servanthood, creating in us a heart of humility that will not allow fame or status to get in the way of service, just as Jesus did not allow equality with God to prevent Him from service.

I think today of John 13 where Jesus got up and took off His outer garment, wrapped a towel around His waist and began to wash the feet of every disciple, even Judas who, we are told just three verses previous, had already been prompted by the devil to betray Jesus. In those days, even if you had just left a Roman bath, clean and shining with perfumed oils, by the time you arrived home, your sandaled feet would be filthy. Because feet weren't merely dirty with the dust of the road but also with sweat and body odour, cleaning them was considered a low job relegated to slaves. This is why this act was so incredible for Jesus to do. He was choosing to wash the dirtiest part of them, the most disgusting, off-putting, smelly part. That's exactly what Jesus did for us at the cross; He took on Himself our smelliest, most disgusting sins, bearing them in His own body, redeeming us and giving us His righteousness in exchange. May we be willing to take off our garments, whatever that may entail, just as Jesus took off His garments to prepare Himself for service.

**Pray**

Father, please help me to serve whole-heartedly by washing feet whatever shape and form this may take, even the feet of my Judas, just as Jesus did. Please make me a servant just like Him! In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

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## Live

With all the tribes receiving their allotment of land, it was new road, new rules. Again, God had worked up stream having already told Moses how this was to function. God tells Joshua to fulfil what He had commanded through Moses, to appoint six cities of refuge (Numbers 35). The purpose of these cities was to protect someone in the case of manslaughter, as opposed to murder. In the case of murder, the avenger of blood tracked down the perpetrator and delivered him over to the authorities for execution. Cities of refuge would spare someone this fate when the death was accidental. On a map, we see that the cities of refuge were well spaced throughout the country. No matter where you were, you were not far from a city of refuge.

The Bible applies this picture of the city of refuge to the believer finding refuge in God. Psalm 46:1 *“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.”* More than 15 other times, the Psalms speak of God as our refuge. The cities of refuge, like Jesus, were within easy reach of the needy person; they were of no use unless someone could get there. A crucial distinction between the cities of refuge and Jesus is that the cities of refuge only helped the innocent, but the guilty can come to Jesus and find safety; that deserves some praise from us today as we focus on Him as our refuge.

There are so many convincing reasons why Jesus is worthy of being loved, praised, trusted, and served. Jesus has exhausted the penalty of our sins and though we are still destined to die, we’ve already been delivered from judgment because of His once-and-for-all sacrifice. Jesus has broken the power of death. Sin’s dominion has been destroyed in our life. He is most certainly the boss. His reign of grace is secure and is expanding. When He appears a second time, He will deliver us and the entire cosmos of the very presence of sin!

## Pray

Father, there is no other Saviour like Jesus. He has completely borne my sin, providing me with so great a salvation. I love You greatly. You indeed have become my refuge and my strength, my strong tower that I can hide in. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

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## Live

At last we reach the good old Levites. While they didn't get any allotment of land, God promised them a place to live and thrive in. The rest of Israel gave them towns. This meant that while Jerusalem was far away from some of the tribes, there would still be a Levite-occupied town nearby, keeping the priesthood near to everyone. God thought of everything, didn't He!

Faith differs so much from wishful thinking. Why should we believe in God to answer our prayers, provide us with food, be involved in our family? How do we know our faith isn't simply foolishness? Well, for a start, Scripture tells us that true faith must be grounded in God's promises. If God has promised to do something, then we can trust Him wholeheartedly. If He has not promised to do something, then all the faith in the world won't make it happen.

In Joshua 20 and 21 we see the final outcome of God's promises to Israel. When I read stories like this, I feel like I'm just beginning to understand the true wonders of eternal life and the incomparable life that is ours. It's about knowing God as our loving and sovereign Father, and knowing the sent One, the Messiah and Saviour. It's not merely knowing *about* Him (though there is so much more we want to know about Him); it's about knowing Him intimately, in the most profound way imaginable. Perhaps even more astonishing is that eternal life involves us being known by God. It involves being wanted, accepted, and delighted in, freed from all guilt, and being liberated from all shame. If that weren't enough to melt some brain cells, there is the gift of the Holy Spirit; the depth and vitality of our knowledge of God depends on His work. Our prayer ought to be simple: keep us hungry and thirsty to know You better. Don't let lesser breads satisfy this craving. Don't let other waters quench this thirst.

## Pray

Father, I don't want to just have all my theology sorted; I want to continually cry, "Abba, Father!" Keep revealing more of Jesus to me. Astonish me with His beauty. Mesmerise me with His mercy. Buckle my knees with His affections. Change me by His grace. Free me for His purposes. In His strong name. Amen.



**REFLECT**

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### Live

The two and a half tribes (Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh) from east of the Jordan had come across to help the other tribes win their territory, just as the others had helped them settle their inheritance. This was the deal they had made with Moses. With victory in hand, it was time for the eastern tribes to go home. Job done. As they were crossing the Jordan to go home, the eastern tribes had an idea and constructed a monument to a united Israel, east and west of the Jordan. They did this because they were concerned that if there was no visible sign of unity, their children and children's children would not understand the connection between eastern and western tribes. I wonder what things have been established by me that will pass a positive legacy down to the generations coming after me. I also wonder today what my ancestors have passed down to me that needs revisiting and unfolding.

Unfortunately, the western tribes misunderstood the intentions of the eastern tribes, resulting in a near war. The people assumed they were starting their own brand of religion or something that was rebelling against God. Fortunately, the battle commanders were thinking men and Phinehas led a team of people to seek out the facts rather than rushing blindly to battle. In doing so, they discovered it was actually an honourable, good idea from the eastern tribes. So, Israel was established in peace.

We should learn from this today; making assumptions is always a dangerous practice. Makes me wonder if I have ever acted presumptuously without full knowledge of the facts. What about you? Rather than blindly running into assumption, we should find out what God is saying. We should fill our heart with the music of God's Word, listen to its radical sweetness, generating peace and gratitude. We should allow our joy to be defined by the riches of His Word and our thinking to be shaped by the liberating truths of it.

### Pray

Father, there are so many life lessons in the book of Joshua, lessons that I would do well to learn and practice in all of life. Help me to stop defaulting to think the worst but rather seek You and Your Word for wisdom and guidance. I love You. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

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### Live

Great leaders inspire us to obey God. We depend on their encouragement and example. But what happens when such leaders are no longer around? About twenty years elapsed between the end of the war and Joshua's death. During that time, Joshua's influence kept Israel loyal to God. Now Joshua knows that he is about to die, and he is concerned that Israel's loyalty to God might not continue in his absence. Therefore, he calls the Israelites together to hear a farewell message of challenge and warning. Like any good preacher would do, he packs it into three powerful points. Number 1: make sure you follow the rule book without any detours. Number 2: watch your company, no mucking around with foreign nations. Number 3: don't intermarry.

You may think these three rules were simple enough but let's not forget that these were temptations that lurked in their own backyard. One could summarise Joshua's message with this statement: hold fast to what God has taught you. When we read into the next book of Judges, we will see that they did not adhere to old Joshua's advice. Intermarrying created all kinds of issues that finally brought death, destruction, and separation from their God.

There are some appointments we dread, like going to the dentist, some we tolerate, and others we look forward to as the highlight of our week. But there is one appointment on the books we can look forward to with mounting joy: in God's sovereign grace and unique kindness, He has booked us for the day of salvation in Jesus. God has counted us among those upon whom He has set His eternal affections. He has guaranteed that, no matter what, we are His both now and forever. The salvation He has secured for us and generated in us will be brought to completion one day, sooner maybe than we realise. So, adhere to the rules, keep the faith, stay close to the source. One day, we will all stand before Him!

### Pray

Father, by the quickening work of the Holy Spirit, make it obvious who needs encouragement or a call today. Maybe a note is needed by someone, a face-to-face visit, a word of hope or just earnest prayer for very present struggles, doubts, and fears. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

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**RESPOND**

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**Live**

Throughout the book of Joshua, the Lord demonstrated His faithfulness and power. Joshua, now at the end of his life, jogs their memories of the greatness of their God. He starts from Abraham and brings them to the present moment, showing beyond any shadow of a doubt that every promise God made was fulfilled and every battle He fought was won. At the conclusion of this book, Joshua asks Israel (and I include us) to reaffirm the most important decision of their lives: *"Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve."* God has given us the ability, just like these people, to make choices, and I hope and pray our declarations will be as bold as theirs. Listen to what they said, *"We would never abandon the Lord and serve other gods."* *"No, we will serve the Lord."* *"So, we too will serve the Lord, for He alone is God."* These are their proclamations of dedication but, alas, they failed and fell miserably.

This book opened with a brand-new leader facing an impossible task (in his own strength). But what a legacy, what a leader, a man full of integrity who led God's people almost seamlessly. As he slips out to meet his God, he declares, *"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."* I so love this man, Joshua. I'm inspired by his life and his legendary call to choose who we are going to serve. I feel liking singing the words of Martin Luther, *"And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us, we will not fear, for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us. The Prince of Darkness grim, we tremble not for him. His rage we can endure, for lo, his doom is sure. One little word shall fell him."* May the light of God's love empower us to love Him more than we fear death, empower us to show up rather than shrink back. We will overcome not by muscle but by His mercy and grace.

**Pray**

Father, may the Spirit continue to declare Your Word so loudly in my heart that all the tempting, seducing, condemning lies of Satan will be drowned out. In light of who You are and what You've done for me, how can I not choose to serve You? In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

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**RESPOND**

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