

Digging Deeper Joshua Week 2

We began this week with Joshua giving orders, with him stepping into his role as the leader of the Israelites.

Joshua 1:10 And Joshua commanded the officers of the people,

It couldn't have been easy for Joshua to take over for Moses – those were some pretty big shoes to fill. It is not easy to follow in the footsteps of a great leader. Have you ever found yourself having to fill someone else's shoes? How did you feel going into the situation?

In situations where we are replacing someone else at work, on a committee, on a team or even in a neighborhood, we might be tempted to get into a comparison game. The result of playing the comparison game is that your joy will be sapped. There are two possible results when you start comparing – you think you are better than the other person, which results in pride or you think you can never measure up which is also pride. Pride is like a coin – on one side you think too highly of yourself and on the other side you think too little of yourself. In both instances you think too much of yourself. CS Lewis puts it this way – “Humility is not thinking **less** of yourself, it is thinking of **yourself less**.”

Which side of the pride coin do you suffer from most often? Pray that the Lord will help you think of Him more and yourself less.

The Israelites were ready and willing to follow Joshua. It is a sign that they completely accepted him as their leader.

Joshua 1:16-18 And they answered Joshua, “All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. ¹⁷ Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you. Only may the Lord your God be with you, as he was with Moses! ¹⁸ Whoever rebels against your commandment and disobeys your words, whatever you command him, shall be put to death. Only be strong and courageous.”

In this response of the Israelites, I am reminded of New Year's resolutions. You know, the ones we make each year and for some of us we make the same ones year after year. The one where you vow to eat healthier, lose weight and exercise or maybe the one where you are going to

save more money or spend less or how about the one where we are going to read the Bible in a year? When we make these resolutions we are very gung ho and very excited. We are ready to make a change and start fresh. However, a couple of weeks or months into these resolutions, our resolve isn't quite the same as it was in the beginning. Some of the excitement we had has started to wear off and we aren't really keeping our commitment very well at all. The same can be true of sin in our lives. We can confess it to the Lord and feel confident that we will NEVER do that again, until we do. The Israelites respond to Joshua's commands with a resounding, "YES!". They are just sure they will be able to do whatever he asks and they are willing to go wherever he wants them to go. It even becomes a bit humorous that they say they will obey him in all things just like they did Moses.

What can you recall about the Israelites time with Moses that doesn't exactly line up with following everything he asked of them?

What have you recently committed to doing but then your resolve began to wane? What sins have you confessed and said you would never do again, but you ended up doing it again?

The Israelites were just like us – fickle people who are willing to follow a leader as long as it's easy, as long as the leader is doing things the way we want when we want and as long as what they are doing is benefiting us. Sound a bit familiar? We do the same thing with the Lord. We commit to follow Him completely. We commit to read, study and meditate on His Word. We commit to be people who take their needs, worries, concerns, hurts and frustrations to the Lord first. We make all kinds of commitments and then struggle to follow through on them. Sometimes we make commitments that the Lord isn't calling us to make. Spend a few minutes in prayer and ask the Lord to reveal to you what you have committed to do but are failing to do. Ask the Lord what HE would have you commit to do and ask for HIS strength to do it and record what you hear from the Lord and what commitment you are willing to make.

The Israelites said that anyone who rebels against Joshua's commands should be put to death – pretty ironic for a people who were not exactly known for following through with what they were asked to do. We struggle with commitment and faithfulness, but the Lord does not. He is always faithful even when we are not. Write a prayer of thanksgiving to the Lord for His faithfulness.

In Joshua 2 we see Joshua sending out spies. Do you remember how many spies were sent out on the first spy mission? (Numbers 13:1-6)

Do you remember how long they were sent out to spy out the land? (Numbers 13:25)

Joshua doesn't send out 12 spies as Moses did and he didn't send them out for 40 days. How many spies did he send and how long were they gone?

Why do you think Joshua did it differently?

I think one of the reasons why Joshua did it differently is because of how it turned out the first time. He and Caleb were the only ones who thought they could take possession of the land because they completely trusted that the Lord would go before them and would help them do it. I think Joshua got a little taste of group mentality where individuals in a group follow along with what the group at large thinks and don't go with their own individual thinking. If it happened to Joshua, I think he wanted to make sure it wouldn't happen again. Instead he only chose 2 people to go. Have you ever found yourself going along with the crowd – kind of a 'going along to get along' attitude?

Sometimes it is easy for us to go along with the crowd – to kind of have our opinion be swayed by others. Has that ever happened to you? Have you been willing to go along with the crowd – maybe you were willing to remain silent and not speak up against the majority. Sometimes the Lord calls us to speak up – to stand firm – to not be swayed. How have you stood firm?

The spies find themselves in the house of Rahab who was a prostitute. She lied to the king and sent the king's men off on a rabbit trail while she hid the two spies. This was done at a huge risk to her but we quickly find out why she was willing to take such a huge risk.

Joshua 2:8-9 *Before the men lay down, she came up to them on the roof⁹ and said to the men, "I know that the Lord has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you."*

This fear that fell on the people of the land was predicted previously in Scripture. Part of the Song of Moses and Miriam that Moses and the Israelites sang to the Lord.

Exodus 15:15-16 *Now are the chiefs of Edom dismayed; trembling seizes the leaders of Moab; all the inhabitants of Canaan have melted away.¹⁶ Terror and dread fall upon them; because of the greatness of your arm, they are still as a stone, till your people, O Lord, pass by, till the people pass by whom you have purchased.*

How quickly they allowed their fear to trump their faith. How quickly they forgot the amazing miracles the Lord had done for them. Their confidence in the Lord was short lived. Is it the same for us? Can you think of a time when you had experienced the Lord moving in your life mightily and fairly soon afterwards forgot and your confidence in Him waned? Spend some time reflecting on the times and ways the Lord has moved in your life and record a few of those here. Then ask the Lord to show you where your confidence in Him may be waning and where you have forgotten WHO He is in the midst of your circumstances.

Rahab was willing to risk her life because of what she KNEW. She KNEW the Lord had given the Israelites the land. In the video teaching I explained that this word for 'know' in the Greek is yada. This word in Hebrew is yada. Ancient Hebrew.org says this about the word yada – to know: "The idea of "knowing" in Ancient Hebrew thought is similar to our understanding of knowing but is more personal and intimate. We may say that we "know" someone but simply mean we "know" of his or her existence, but in Hebrew thought, one can only "know" someone if they have a personal and intimate relationship with them."

Rahab KNEW the Lord in a personal way. So what do we know about God? Let's spend a little bit of time searching the Scriptures for some of the attributes of God – the things that we should KNOW about Him.

- God is just. He is fair and always does what is right and good.
 - Deuteronomy 32:4 *"The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he."*
- God is immutable. God never changes. His plans don't change and His promises do not change.

- Hebrews 13:8 *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*
- God is holy. He is infinitely perfect in goodness and righteousness.
 - 1 Peter 1:16 *since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."*
- God is merciful. He is infinitely compassionate and kind.
 - Exodus 34:6 *The Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,*
- God is omniscient. God is all knowing.
 - Psalm 147:5 (NIV) *Great is our Lord and mighty in power; his understanding has no limit.*
- God is sovereign. He is in control of all people and all circumstances at all times.
 - Psalm 115:3 *Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.*
- God is omnipresent. He is in all places at all times.
 - Jeremiah 23:24 *Can a man hide himself in secret places so that I cannot see him? declares the Lord. Do I not fill heaven and earth? declares the Lord.*
- God is love.
 - John 4:8 *Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.*

Which of these characteristics/attributes of God did you need to hear today? Which one(s) do you need to be reminded of regularly? Write a note of praise to the Lord for WHO He is.

Can you think of a time when you personally experienced these characteristics of God playing out in your life – a time when He was present with you? Perhaps a time when you experienced His love? Have you experienced His wisdom or His power? How have you found comfort in the fact that He is in control of all people and all circumstances at all time?

Rahab’s great faith really pays off and she asks for something in return for her protection of the Israelite spies.

Joshua 2:12-14 Now then, please swear to me by the Lord that, as I have dealt kindly with you, you also will deal kindly with my father's house, and give me a sure sign ¹³ that

you will save alive my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to even to death! If you do not tell this business of ours, then when the Lord gives us the land we will deal kindly and faithfully with you."

The word 'kindly' in these verses is from the Hebrew word hesed. From the Key Word Study Bible, hesed means "to be merciful, faithful, love. It essentially denotes an act of kindness, love or mercy. An act of "hesed" presupposes the existence of a relationship between the parties involved, where no formal relationship has previously been recognized. The person exercising hesed has chosen to treat the recipient as if such a relationship did exist."

Rahab's willingness to lie to the king and put her own life at risk. The Key Word Study Bible goes on to say that "acts of hesed are often reciprocated and it is not unusual for the benefactor to request a return of hesed from a recipient." We see this come play out in verse 13 when Rahab asks the spies to spare the lives of her family.

How have you experienced this kind of kindness – this hesed? How have you shown it to others?

We see in verse 14 that the spies agree to show Rahab not only hesed but also they agree to deal with her faithfully. According to the Key Word Study Bible, "faithfully" is from aman and means to believe, trust. It can also relate to integrity and faithfulness. The term is used frequently of God in denoting His faithfulness." The spies were willing to show Rahab and her family kindness and they would be faithful in their agreement with her. Being faithful in our agreements can be challenging at times. How faithful are you when you make a commitment? Can you think of times when your faithfulness was lacking in terms of what you agreed to do or not to do? Thankfully the Lord is always faithful to us even when we are far from faithful.

I want to spend just a few minutes on the genealogy of Rahab. Rahab was the mother of Boaz. Boaz married Ruth and they had a son named Obed. Obed had a son named Jesse. Jesse had a son named David. So Rahab was an ancestor to King David. She is listed in the genealogy of Christ.

Matthew 1:5-6 and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, ⁶ and Jesse the father of David the king. David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah,

She is listed in the pillars of faith in Hebrews 11:31.

Hebrews 11:31 By faith Rahab the prostitute did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given a friendly welcome to the spies.

Rahab also appears in James 2:25.

James 2:25 And in the same way was not also Rahab the prostitute justified by works when she received the messengers and sent them out by another way?

One of the things we see clearly in the life of Rahab is what God can do with someone who puts their faith in Him. If God could redeem a prostitute like Rahab, don't you think He can redeem you? If God could redeem her past, what can He do with yours? The enemy wants us to believe that we can't possibly serve the Lord, be changed by Him or please Him because of things we have done in our past or things that were don't to us in our past. God is BIGGER than your past. He can and He will redeem your past if you allow Him – His healing power is available to us but we must take possession of it. What do you need the Lord to redeem today?

Just as the Lord redeemed Rahab's past and used her for His purposes, He can do the same for us. He has a plan for our lives and He wants us to live the lives He created us to live. Pray with me for the Lord to use us mightily for His kingdom and to not allow our past to define our present.

Lord, You created us. You knit us together in our mother's womb. There is no part of us that You are not familiar with. There is nothing we have done or failed to do in our past that will prevent You from using us to fulfill your purposes today. There is nothing that has happened to us that would prevent You from using us. We know that you are a God of love, slow to anger and abundant in mercy and forgiveness. Help us to lay our past at the foot of the cross for you to redeem. Help us to turn from our old ways to following Your ways. Heal our wounds, forgive our sins and give us the courage to repent of our sinful ways so we can more fully serve You. Guide and equip us, gracious Lord, to help Your kingdom grow here on earth. We love you, Lord and we KNOW that You alone are God and we want to serve You faithfully. In Jesus' name, Amen.