

## Digging Deeper Joshua Week 4

This week we looked at what happened after the Israelites made it into the Promised Land. We know that the land was a dangerous place because when Joshua sent the two spies they had to be hidden from the King and his men. They were not in friendly territory and the first thing the Lord does is NOT to prepare them for a physical battle but to prepare them spiritually.

Whenever we face tough circumstances, perhaps we should prepare spiritually before attacking whatever problem we are facing. In starting with spiritual preparation, we will be taking our focus off of our circumstances and putting it on the One who is aware of what we are facing and has the ability to do something about our circumstances. If you are facing a challenge right now – at work, in a relationship, financially, health related or any other type of challenge – are you spiritually prepared to tackle the issue? Have you sought the Lord through prayer and His Word? Have you spent time listening to see what He has to say to you about your situation? If not, spend some time doing that now and record what you learn. If you have, record what the Lord has already told you.

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Right off the bat in Joshua 5 we see that the people on the west side of the Jordan did recognize that the hand of the Lord is mighty.

*Joshua 5:1 As soon as all the kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan to the west, and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea, heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan for the people of Israel until they had crossed over, their hearts melted and there was no longer any spirit in them because of the people of Israel.*

Wow – the power of what can happen when people HEAR what God has done. I know talking about your faith or talking about what God has done can be scary and even a bit intimidating. We live in a world that is not always open to hearing about God. We have become intimidated by fear of offending someone or bothering them. It is easy to simply think we can evangelize through how we live our lives but that is not what the Word says. We are to live our lives in a way that is pleasing to the Lord so others can see Him working in us but it is NOT enough. We are called to open our mouths and speak about the Lord so others can hear.

*Romans 10:17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.*

Who have you shared your faith with recently? What has the Lord done in and through you recently that you can share with others? Who does the Lord want you to share your faith with today? Make a commitment and follow through in obedience.

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I recently took a trip with a few friends and every night at dinner when our waiter or waitress brought us our food we told him/her that we were about to bless our food and was there anything we could

lift up in prayer for them. Not only did NONE of them say no – the majority of them wanted to join us in praying. It may not seem like a big deal but imagine seeing a waiter join a table for prayer in the middle of a restaurant – it's not something you see every day. My friend has been doing this for 2 years and NO ONE has ever said no. Are you willing to step out in faith and take the prayer challenge and ask how you can pray for your wait staff? I will tell you that you will be abundantly blessed by the privilege of people sharing their lives with you and you will bless them as you lift them in prayer to the Lord.

The Lord's first priority was to prepare the Israelites spiritually and He did this through having the men circumcised.

*Joshua 5:2-7 At that time the Lord said to Joshua, "Make flint knives and circumcise the sons of Israel a second time." So Joshua made flint knives and circumcised the sons of Israel at Gibeath-haaraloth. <sup>4</sup> And this is the reason why Joshua circumcised them: all the males of the people who came out of Egypt, all the men of war, had died in the wilderness on the way after they had come out of Egypt. Though all the people who came out had been circumcised, yet all the people who were born on the way in the wilderness after they had come out of Egypt had not been circumcised. <sup>6</sup> For the people of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, until all the nation, the men of war who came out of Egypt, perished, because they did not obey the voice of the Lord; the Lord swore to them that he would not let them see the land that the Lord had sworn to their fathers to give to us, a land flowing with milk and honey. <sup>7</sup> So it was their children, whom he raised up in their place, that Joshua circumcised. For they were uncircumcised, because they had not been circumcised on the way.*

Circumcision was a reminder of the covenant that the Lord had made with Abraham when He promised the land to Abraham and his offspring.

*Genesis 17:7-11 And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. <sup>8</sup> And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God." <sup>9</sup> And God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. <sup>10</sup> This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. <sup>11</sup> You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you.*

It was important for the Lord to remind the people of His original covenant with Abraham because that is how they came to be in the Promised Land – in the land that He was giving them. God NEVER goes back on His promises or His covenants. He is 100% trustworthy 100% of the time.

Is there a promise that you are waiting to be fulfilled in your life? Is there something that you are trusting to the Lord? Don't give up, persevere in prayer and know that the Lord is faithful. He will answer but His answer may not be the answer you are looking for or His timing may not line up with yours. Take a minute to thank the Lord for His faithfulness and for being trustworthy – tell Him that you KNOW that He is trustworthy and that His Word is true. This serves as a great reminder for us all.

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The purpose of the circumcision was to be a sign of the covenant between God and the people. A reminder that they were His people if they followed His commands and that He would be there God. The same is true for us today – He is our God and we are His people. We don't have to be physically circumcised but we do need to allow the Lord to circumcise our hearts. I love how Warren Wiersbe says it, "This physical operation on the body was meant to be a symbol of a spiritual operation on the heart." He goes on to say, "No amount of external surgery can change the inner person. It's when we repent and turn to God for help that He can change our hearts and make us love and obey Him more."

Is there something the Lord wants you to repent of? Is there an area in your life where you need to turn from something and back to the Lord? Is there an area of your life where sin has begun to creep in and you need to confess and turn from it? Spend some time allowing the Lord to examine your heart and to circumcise it so you can be more like His Son Jesus.

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After the Israelites were circumcised, they were able to participate in the Passover.

*Joshua 5:10 While the people of Israel were encamped at Gilgal, they kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month in the evening on the plains of Jericho.*

The celebration of the Passover was something that was instituted before the Israelites were set free from slavery in Egypt.

*Exodus 12:6-7 and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight. <sup>7</sup> "Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it.*

This is what the Israelites were told to do while they were in Egypt so that they would be protected from the 10<sup>th</sup> plague which was the death of the firstborn. So when the angel of the Lord passed over the land to kill the firstborn, those who had the blood of the lamb on their doorposts would be spared. Celebrating the Passover was a way for the Israelites to remember what the Lord did for them in Egypt and how He brought them out of slavery. Everything associated with this celebration was for remembrance – to remember what the Lord had done for them.

We see over and over in the Bible ways to help the people remember what the Lord has done for them. We saw in the previous week's study the stones of remembrance from the Jordan River and we just saw the purpose of the Israelites celebrating the Passover. Below are other feasts/festivals that were instituted by the Lord to help them remember what He had done for them.

Feast	Bible Location	Celebration/Commemoration
Passover	Lev. 23, Num. 28, Dt. 16	God sparing 1 <sup>st</sup> born son in Egypt
Unleavened Bread	Lev. 23, Num. 28, Dt. 16	Exodus from Egypt & difficulties
First Fruits	Lev. 23	First part of barley harvest
Weeks	Lev. 23, Num. 28, Dt. 16	End of barley harvest, beginning of wheat harvest
Trumpets	Lev. 23, Num. 29	Beginning of 7 <sup>th</sup> month
Day of Atonement	Lev. 23, Num. 29	Removal of people's sin
Tabernacle (Booths)	Lev. 23, Num. 29, Dt. 16	God's protection & guidance in the wilderness

Did you learn anything new about these feasts? Why do you think they needed yearly feasts/festivals?

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Did you notice how many feasts there were? Why is that significant?

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The Lord did something new for the Israelites in regards to food in the Promised Land.

*Joshua 5:11-12 And the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate of the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. <sup>12</sup> And the manna ceased the day after they ate of the produce of the land. And there was no longer manna for the people of Israel, but they ate of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.*

They were now to eat of the fruit of the Promised Land and there would be no more manna. Do you know how they came to have manna in the first place?

*Exodus 16:2-4 And the whole congregation of the people of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness, <sup>3</sup> and the people of Israel said to them, "Would that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the meat pots and ate bread to the full, for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." <sup>4</sup> Then the Lord said to Moses, "Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not.*

The Israelites complained about not having anything to eat – this complaint came 4 days after their miraculous crossing of the Red Sea. They complained and the Lord provided. They were tested in whether or not they would be obedient to the Lord in gathering the manna – they were to gather

only a day's portion. Why do you think the Lord tested them in this way? Why do you think they were only able to get one day's portion at a time?

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When we say the Lord's prayer we say, "Give us this day our daily bread". This is how Jesus taught His disciples to pray – to pray for daily provision. Do we do that or do we want provision for the week, month, year or even longer? If the Lord asks you to do something, He usually doesn't lay out the whole plan in front of you – He gives you the next step He wants you to take. Why do you think that is? How hard is it for you to only know the next step and not the road map?

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Joshua gets a surprise visitor.

*Joshua 5:13-15 When Joshua was by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, a man was standing before him with his drawn sword in his hand. And Joshua went to him and said to him, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?"<sup>14</sup> And he said, "No; but I am the commander of the army of the Lord. Now I have come." And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped and said to him, "What does my lord say to his servant?"<sup>15</sup> And the commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, "Take off your sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.*

I can't imagine what it must have been like for Joshua to look up and see a man with a sword drawn in front of me. He identifies himself as the commander of the army of the Lord – a reminder that it is the Lord who fights the battles for us. The appearance of the commander of the Lord's army was so important for Joshua because the Israelites were now in the Promised Land but they were going to have to fight many battles. The Lord had given them the land but they would have to take possession of it. There is a lot that goes on in the spiritual realm that we are not even aware of – the Lord is moving and putting people in place and warding off other things from happening. When you face difficulties or battles – do you seek the Lord first? Do you realize that He may have already gone before you? Do you arm yourself with the full armor of God or do you go into battle unprepared?

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The battle of Jericho is a very familiar story for many of us. I pray that you can slow down and take in some new details as we study it today.

*Joshua 6:1 Now Jericho was shut up inside and outside because of the people of Israel. None went out, and none came in.*

The people of Jericho were hunkered down inside the city walls in absolute fear of the Israelites. Fear can be so powerful and it was not the first time a group of people was fearful of the Israelites.

Remember how the Israelites came to be slaves in Egypt? The Egyptians were fearful because the Israelites were becoming too numerous.

*Exodus 1:9-10 And he said to his people, "Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. <sup>10</sup> Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and, if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land."*

Fear can make us lash out, overreact and make decisions that we wouldn't make if we weren't fearful. What decisions have you made out of fear? How has fear caused you to lash out or overreact?

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Fear can be paralyzing – it can keep us from doing what the Lord calls us to do. Remember when the 10 spies gave a bad report on the land, they decided not to go into the Promised Land for fear that they wouldn't be successful. There are always consequences when we aren't obedient – for the Israelites it delayed their journey into the Promised Land by 40 years and all who were 20 years old or older at the time didn't make it into the Promised Land. Is fear holding you back from doing what the Lord has asked you to do? Has fear kept you from being obedient and if so, what were the consequences?

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Fear can have us isolate ourselves from others the way the people of Jericho did. Our fears have certainly been tested during this pandemic. I am not suggesting that you shouldn't stay home or even limit your contact with others but we should be making the decision to do so without being overwhelmed by fear. Have you been overwhelmed by fear – going down the what if trail during this pandemic because of health concerns or financial concerns? Or perhaps you have had an overwhelming fear of having the virus without knowing it and passing it on to a loved one. We need to be cautious and make wise decisions but we are not to be paralyzed.

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The Israelites were given very specific instructions on how the Lord wanted them to handle the battle of Jericho. They were to march around the city seven times for 6 days and they were to be SILENT. Can you imagine that? To have that many people marching for a few hours in total silence must have been almost impossible and yet the Israelites were obedient. I am sure that the instructions to march around the city seven times for seven days must have seemed a bit strange but they were obedient.

Sometimes what the Lord asks us to do doesn't really seem to make sense yet He expects obedience. We are to trust what He says and to obey in the exact way and in the exact time He asks. Can you think of something the Lord asked you to do that didn't make sense but you were obedient and afterwards you could better understand why He asked you to do what He asked you to do?

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Let's look at the specific instructions that the Lord gave to the Israelites.

*Joshua 6:3-5 You shall march around the city, all the men of war going around the city once. Thus shall you do for six days. <sup>4</sup> Seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark. On the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. <sup>5</sup> And when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, when you hear the sound of the trumpet, then all the people shall shout with a great shout, and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and the people shall go up, everyone straight before him."*

The number 7 appears multiple times in these verses – march 7 times around the city for 7 days with 7 priests carrying 7 trumpets. The number 7 is significant in Scripture – it means completeness or perfection. There are multiple places in Scripture where the number seven appears:

- God created for 7 days – 6 of those days He created the heavens and the earth and on the 7<sup>th</sup> day He created the Sabbath.
- Elisha tells Naaman to bathe in the Jordan River seven times to be healed (2 Kings 5:9-10)
- Jesus made 7 statements on the cross:
  - Luke 23:34 *And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments.*
  - Luke 23:43 *And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise."*
  - John 19:26-27 *When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" <sup>27</sup> Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.*
  - Matthew 27:46 *And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*
  - John 19:28 *After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst."*
  - John 19:30 *When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*
  - Luke 23:46 *Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last.*
- 7 I Am statements of Jesus
  - John 6:35 Bread of Life
  - John 8:12 Light of the world
  - John 10:9 Gate to salvation
  - John 10:11 Good Shepherd
  - John 11:25-26 Resurrection and the life
  - John 14:6 The Way, the truth and the life
  - John 15:5 The vine

- Peter asks Jesus how many times we are to forgive others – 77 x 7 (Matthew 18:21-22)

How do each of the examples show completion or perfection in regards to the number seven? Did you learn anything new about the number seven?

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Imagine the faith it must have taken to do this march each day for 7 days and to know that that was all they were to do and then they were to return to the camp. They would have been exposed by marching around the city – they could have been attacked at any time yet they were obedient! Their obedience pays off.

*Joshua 6:20-21 So the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted a great shout, and the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they captured the city. <sup>21</sup> Then they devoted all in the city to destruction, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and donkeys, with the edge of the sword.*

Can you think of a time when you were obedient and it really paid off? Did it benefit you alone or did others benefit from your obedience as well?

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The fulfillment of the promise made to Rahab is found in Joshua 6:25 But Rahab the prostitute and her father's household and all who belonged to her, Joshua saved alive. And she has lived in Israel to this day, because she hid the messengers whom Joshua sent to spy out Jericho

Joshua was faithful to make sure that the promise made to Rahab was kept. Because of Joshua's faithfulness, we know that Rahab lived amongst the Israelites because she becomes the mother of Boaz who eventually marries Ruth.

How faithful are we with our promises? As much as we want to be faithful, we often fall short. We may do what we say we are going to do but maybe not in the time frame we say we are going to do it. It is easy for us to have rationalizations and explanations for why we don't always keep our promises fully but do we extend the same grace to others. Can you think of a time when you didn't fulfill a promise or perhaps when someone didn't keep a promise to you? How did you handle that?

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Joshua is very clear with the Israelites that the city of Jericho should not be rebuilt.

*Joshua 6:26 Joshua laid an oath on them at that time, saying, "Cursed before the Lord be the man who rises up and rebuilds this city, Jericho.*



*“At the cost of his firstborn shall he lay its foundation, and at the cost of his youngest son shall he set up its gates.”*

Unfortunately as time went on, this oath that Joshua made with the people was forgotten or ignored and the consequences were severe. This area was not resettled for about 500 years after Joshua – it wasn't until the time of King Ahab. We find that story in 1 Kings 16.

*1 Kings 16:33-34 And Ahab made an Asherah. Ahab did more to provoke the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him. <sup>34</sup> In his days Hiel of Bethel built Jericho. He laid its foundation at the cost of Abiram his firstborn, and set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the Lord, which he spoke by Joshua the son of Nun.*

This section of Joshua ends with a reminder that the Lord was with him.

*Joshua 6:27 So the Lord was with Joshua, and his fame was in all the land.*

I want you to pray about who needs to hear those words of encouragement today – that the Lord is with them just like He was with Joshua. That He sees them, He knows what they are going through and He will be right there with them. Please share these words of encouragement with someone today. Find a way to share something you have learned from this study with someone else – if you have been blessed in any way, I pray you will use it to bless someone else.