

CONQUERING CANAAN

Date: 11.15.26 | Remember and Be Challenged
Scripture: Joshua 23-24

CENTRAL TRUTHS



PRESCHOOL:

God always keeps His promises, so we can trust Him.

YOUNGER KIDS (K5-2ND GRADE):

God is always faithful to us, so we can trust Him and worship Him alone.

OLDER KIDS (3RD-5TH GRADE):

God faithfully keeps His promises, and because He has rescued us through Jesus, we can trust Him and serve Him alone

STUDENTS:

God's faithfulness and grace—not our goodness—provide the rescue we need through Jesus and call us to respond with faith, worship, and obedience.

ADULTS:

God faithfully accomplishes what His people cannot: He keeps His promises, provides rescue from sin through Jesus, and calls His redeemed people to respond to His grace with wholehearted faith, worship, and obedience.

MEMORY VERSE

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." Joshua 1:9



DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

What is idolatry? Idolatry is trusting in created things rather than the Creator for our hope and happiness, significance, and security. NCC q.17

BACKGROUND INFO FOR LEADERS

Throughout the book of Joshua, God has proven Himself faithful to His people. He gave Israel victory after victory, often in ways that made it unmistakably clear that the Lord—not Israel’s military strength—was responsible for their success. In *Joshua 10:8–11*, God threw large hailstones against Israel’s enemies, and in *Joshua 10:12–14*, He caused the sun to stand still. Joshua faithfully embraced the calling God had given him, leading Israel as they fought for approximately seven years to conquer the land. Israel defeated the major cities in the south in *Joshua 9–10*, and God broke the major resistance in the north in *Joshua 11*.



In *Joshua 12–21*, the focus shifts from conquering the land to possessing it. Joshua divided the land among the tribes of Israel, giving each tribe its allotted territory. The detailed descriptions of boundaries and territories may read almost like a real estate contract, but they demonstrate something incredibly important: God was actually giving His people what He had promised them. The land promised generations earlier to Abraham and his descendants was becoming their home.

Joshua *21:43–45* summarizes the entire conquest: “So the LORD gave Israel all the land that he swore to give to their fathers. And they took possession of it, and they settled there. And the LORD gave them rest on every side just as he had sworn to their fathers. Not one of all their enemies had withstood them, for the LORD had given all their enemies into their hands. Not one word of all the good promises that the LORD had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass.”

That summary gives us one of the major themes of the entire book of Joshua: God keeps His promises. Israel could not boast that its military strategy, strength, or faithfulness had earned the Promised Land. The Lord’s power and sovereignty accomplished the victory. God gave them land they had not worked for, cities they had not built, and vineyards and olive orchards they had not planted (*Joshua 24:13*). The Promised Land was ultimately a gracious gift from a faithful God.

As the book of Joshua draws to a close in chapters 23–24, Joshua is “old and well advanced in years” (*Joshua 23:1*). Many years have passed since Israel crossed the Jordan River and entered the Promised Land, and the Lord has now given Israel rest from its enemies. Knowing that his life is nearing its end, Joshua gathers Israel’s leaders and gives them a final charge.

Joshua begins by pointing the people backward. He does not first remind them of what they have accomplished; he reminds them of what God has done for them: “You have seen all that the LORD your God has done to all these nations for your sake, for it is the LORD your God who has fought for you” (*Joshua 23:3*). Their victories were ultimately God’s victories.

Because God had been faithful to them, Israel was called to respond with faithful obedience. Joshua tells them to “be very strong” and carefully obey what was written in the Law of Moses (*Joshua 23:6–8*). They were to cling to the Lord (*Joshua 23:8*), love Him (*Joshua 23:11*), and refuse to worship the gods of the nations around them (*Joshua 23:7, 12*). Earlier, the people had similarly been commanded “to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments and to cling to him and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul” (*Joshua 22:5*).

There is an intentional connection here to the beginning of Joshua. When Joshua first became Israel’s leader, God commanded him to “be strong and courageous” and carefully obey God’s Word (*Joshua 1:5–9*). Now, near the end of his life, Joshua gives essentially the same challenge to the generation that will continue after him. The question is no longer whether Joshua will faithfully follow the Lord. The question is: Will the next generation?

Joshua also warns the people that God’s faithfulness should not cause them to take His holiness lightly. He tells them, “You know in your hearts and souls, all of you, that not one word has failed of all the good things that the LORD your God promised concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one of them has failed” (*Joshua 23:14*). But the same God who faithfully fulfills His promises of blessing will also faithfully carry out His warnings concerning sin and rebellion (*Joshua 23:12–16*). Israel cannot claim to belong to the Lord while giving its worship to other gods.

Joshua 24 then widens the lens even further. Joshua gathers all the tribes of Israel at Shechem and recounts the story of God’s saving

work throughout Israel's history (*Joshua 24:1–13*). Notice how often God is the One acting. God called Abraham. God gave him Isaac. God sent Moses and Aaron. God brought His people out of slavery in Egypt. God rescued them at the Red Sea. God led them through the wilderness. God brought them across the Jordan. God fought for them. God gave them victory. And God gave them the land.

From Abraham and Isaac to Jacob and his sons, from slavery in Egypt to the Exodus and Red Sea, from the wilderness to the Jordan River and the conquest of Canaan, Israel's story is ultimately the story of God's grace and faithfulness.

God tells them, "I gave you a land on which you had not labored and cities that you had not built, and you dwell in them. You eat the fruit of vineyards and olive orchards that you did not plant" (*Joshua 24:13*). Before Joshua ever tells the Israelites what they must do for God, he reminds them of everything God has already done for them.

That order matters. Their obedience was not a way to earn God's rescue or His covenant love. Their obedience was to be the response of a people who had already experienced God's grace. God rescued them; therefore, they were to worship Him. God had been faithful to them; therefore, they were to be faithful to Him.

Against the backdrop of everything God had done, Joshua gives his famous challenge: "Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness" (*Joshua 24:14*). The word serve occurs repeatedly throughout Joshua 24. Israel must decide where its allegiance lies. Joshua tells them to put away their false gods and choose whom they will serve, declaring, "But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (*Joshua 24:15*).

The people respond that they too will serve the Lord. They remember that He brought them out of slavery in Egypt, performed great signs before them, protected them throughout their journey, and drove out their enemies (*Joshua 24:16–18*). Joshua records their covenant commitment and sets up a large stone as a witness and reminder of the promise they made that day (*Joshua 24:25–27*).

But Joshua also makes clear that serving God cannot be reduced to simply trying harder or making a promise. The Lord is "a holy God" and "a jealous God" (*Joshua 24:19*). Israel's problem was deeper than making a sincere commitment that day. Because they were sinners, they would never perfectly love, obey, and worship God as

He deserved.

This points us beyond Joshua to our need for the gospel. Like Israel, we are prone to idolatry—trusting created things rather than our Creator for our hope, happiness, significance, and security. We may not bow before the gods of the Canaanites, but our sinful hearts continually look for something other than God to satisfy us and save us. We cannot repair that problem simply by promising, “I’ll do better.” We need God to rescue us.

Joshua’s generation experienced an incredible earthly rescue: God delivered them from slavery, defeated their enemies, brought them into the Promised Land, and gave them rest. But these acts of salvation pointed forward to an even greater rescue. Jesus saves His people from slavery to sin, bears the judgment their sin deserves, defeats sin and death through His resurrection, and gives eternal life to everyone who trusts in Him. Jesus is worthy of our worship because He has accomplished the salvation we could never accomplish for ourselves.

This also helps us understand Joshua’s challenge correctly. “Choose this day whom you will serve” (*Joshua 24:15*) is not a message that salvation comes through choosing to behave better. It is a call to wholehearted allegiance to the God who has already demonstrated His grace and faithfulness. For believers, obedience flows from God’s saving work rather than earning it.

Joshua remained faithful to the Lord throughout his leadership and died at 110 years old (*Joshua 24:29*). “Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua and had known all the work that the LORD did for Israel” (*Joshua 24:31*). The book closes with the burial of Joseph’s bones (*Joshua 24:32*), providing one final reminder of God’s faithfulness across generations. Centuries earlier, Joseph believed God would bring His people out of Egypt and into the land He had promised (*Genesis 50:24–25*). Now his bones were buried in that very land.

From beginning to end, Joshua is not primarily a story about Israel’s greatness or even Joshua’s greatness. It is a story about the faithfulness of God. The Lord fought for His people (*Joshua 23:3*). The Lord fulfilled every good promise He had made (*Joshua 21:45; 23:14*). The Lord gave them what they could never have provided for themselves (*Joshua 24:13*).

And the same promise-keeping God ultimately fulfills His greatest promise in Jesus. Israel needed more than a faithful leader like Joshua and more than a land in which to live. They needed a Savior who could deal with their sin and give them lasting rest. Jesus is that very Savior. God's faithfulness in Joshua should lead us not merely to say, "I will try harder to serve God," but to trust the God who saves, worship Him alone, and respond to His grace with lives of faithful obedience.

TELL THE STORY

Joshua 23-24



Many years had passed since the Lord gave His people rest from war. Joshua was now an older man. He addressed the leaders of the people.

Joshua said, "You have seen for yourselves everything the LORD did for you. He fought for you and gave you the land He promised. Be very strong and continue obeying all of God's laws. Do not worship the gods of the other nations. Instead, be loyal to the LORD your God.

"If you turn away from the LORD and begin serving the gods of the other nations, know for certain that God will not fight for you. The good promises God has made to you have all come true. So, do not worship other gods, or you will not remain in the land God has given you."

Then, Joshua called all the people of Israel together. He reported God's words, saying, "Long ago, I called Abraham to leave his home and the gods he worshiped and to follow Me. Abraham had Isaac, and Isaac had Jacob and Esau. Jacob and his sons went to Egypt, where your ancestors were put into slavery.

"Then I sent Moses and Aaron and defeated Egypt by sending the plagues, and My people were free. When it looked like the army of Egypt was about to capture my people again, I brought the Red Sea down on them to destroy them. After that, I led the people in the wilderness for a long time.

"Then I took you across the Jordan River. I fought for you and gave you victory in every battle. I gave you land you did not work for, cities

you did not build, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant.”

Joshua then said, “Therefore, fear the LORD and worship Him alone. You must choose for yourselves who will you worship: The LORD your God or false gods. As for me and my family, we will worship the LORD.”

The people replied, “We will not abandon the Lord to worship other gods! He brought us up out of slavery in Egypt and performed great miracles to save us. He protected us and defeated armies for us. We will worship the LORD, because He is our God.”

Joshua died at the age of 110 and was buried in the land God had promised to His people.

Joshua reminded the people that God saved them from Egypt and gave them the Promised Land. He told them to worship God alone. Jesus is worthy of all worship because he saves those who trust in Him from sin and gives them eternal life.

REBUILD THE STORY

1. According to Joshua 23:1, what had the Lord given Israel?
(*Joshua 23:1*)

2. What did Joshua remind the leaders that the Lord had done for them? (*Joshua 23:3*)

3. What did Joshua tell the Israelites to be careful to do?
(*Joshua 23:6*)

4. What did Joshua warn the Israelites not to do?
(*Joshua 23:7–8, 12–13*)

5. What did Joshua remind the people about God's promises?
(*Joshua 23:14*)



6. In Joshua 24:1–13, what are some ways God had shown His power and faithfulness to Israel? (*Joshua 24:1–13*)
7. What choice did Joshua challenge the Israelites to make, and how did the people respond? (*Joshua 24:14–18*)
8. What did Joshua do to help the Israelites remember the commitment they made to God? (*Joshua 24:25–27*)
9. Why do you think Joshua spent so much time reminding the Israelites of everything God had done for them before asking them to choose whom they would serve?
10. The Israelites had seen God do amazing things, but Joshua still warned them about worshiping other gods. Why do you think it can be easy for people to turn away from God even after seeing His faithfulness?
11. Joshua told the people to choose whom they would serve. Why isn't simply saying, "I choose God," enough to make us perfectly faithful to Him?
12. How does remembering what God has done help us trust and follow Him when we face something difficult or are tempted to put something else before Him?

GOSPEL EMPHASIS

Throughout Joshua, God repeatedly shows that He faithfully keeps His promises. As Joshua's life draws to a close, he reminds Israel, "Not one word has failed of all the good things that the LORD your God promised concerning you" (*Joshua 23:14*). Israel had not earned God's faithfulness; God had graciously rescued, provided for, protected, and fought for His people.



Each part of Israel's journey reveals something about God's saving grace. In *Joshua 1*, the Promised Land was a gift Israel had not earned, just as salvation is God's gracious gift rather than something we earn through obedience (*Joshua 1:2–9; Ephesians 2:8–9*). In *Joshua 2*, Rahab demonstrated that faith trusts God's promise of rescue; her actions did not earn her salvation but showed the faith she had placed in God (*Joshua 2:9–14; Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25*). In *Joshua 3–4*, God made a way through the Jordan that Israel could not make for themselves and called them to remember His saving work (*Joshua 3:13–17; 4:6–7, 21–24*). In *Joshua 6*, Jericho showed both God's righteous judgment against sin and His gracious rescue of Rahab. Only God could provide the victory and rescue, pointing us toward Jesus, who saves those who trust in Him from the judgment their sin deserves (*Joshua 6:2–5, 20, 22–25; Romans 3:23–26*).

Now, in *Joshua 23–24*, Joshua calls Israel to remember it all. God gave them the land, fought their battles, made a way through the Jordan, brought down Jericho, and fulfilled every promise He had made. Because of God's grace and faithfulness, Joshua challenged them, "Choose this day whom you will serve" (*Joshua 24:15*). Their obedience was to be a response to God's grace, not a way of earning it.

But entering the Promised Land could not solve Israel's greatest problem: their sinful hearts. Sin causes people to turn from God and trust created things for the hope, happiness, significance, and security that belong to the Creator alone. Israel could promise, "We will serve the LORD" (*Joshua 24:21*), but they could not make themselves perfectly faithful. They needed more than another promise to obey; they needed God to rescue them from sin itself.

Ultimately, Jesus accomplishes the rescue Joshua could never provide. Joshua could lead God's people into the Promised Land, but he could not change their hearts or defeat sin and death. Jesus perfectly obeyed God in our place, took the punishment our sin deserves, rose victoriously from the grave, and gives new life to everyone who trusts in Him. (*Romans 5:19; 1 Corinthians 15:54–57; Hebrews 4:8–10*)

The book of Joshua shows us that God acts first in grace, and His people respond in faith and obedience. God gives what we cannot earn, rescues those who trust Him, makes the way we cannot make, wins the victory we cannot win, and keeps every promise He makes. The God who kept His promises to Israel ultimately kept His greatest

promise by sending Jesus. Because Jesus has accomplished our salvation, we can trust Him, worship Him alone, and respond to His grace with faithful obedience.

WHAT DOES THIS PASSAGE TEACH US ABOUT GOD?

Use the attributes of God list and determine the characteristics of God that we see in today's story. How can knowing these characteristics of God to be true change the way we live in Christ?

PRAYER PROMPTS

God, thank You for constantly pursuing us! Thank You for keeping Your promises and for reminding us of Your continued faithfulness throughout many generations. Help us to trust You alone and follow You daily. We love You!



THIS WEEK'S BIBLE READING

Psalm 136