

JOSHUA





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We believe that the Bible has God for its author; salvation for its end; and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter and that all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. To review LifeWay's doctrinal guideline, please visit lifeway.com/doctrinalguideline.

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➤ ABOUT THIS STUDY

GOD ALWAYS KEEPS HIS PROMISES.

Any thoughts that God is a disconnected deity aimlessly floating somewhere in the heavens isn't what the Bible teaches. Instead, the Bible and the Book of Joshua tell us that God is active and involved in the lives of His people.

God led His people into the promised land. Along the way they faced various trials and temptations. Through it all the Lord taught them to be faithful. He showed them that His ways are the right ways.

Explore the Bible: Joshua reminds believers that God has a plan for our lives. It's undeniable when we look at the life of Joshua. These accounts of faithfulness in adversity assure us that God is always in control and uses everything to accomplish His great purpose.

The **Explore the Bible** series will help you know and apply the encouraging and empowering truth of God's Word. Each session is organized in the following way.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT: This page explains the original context of each passage and begins relating the primary themes to your life today.

EXPLORE THE TEXT: These pages walk you through Scripture, providing helpful commentary and encouraging thoughtful interaction with God through His Word.

OBEY THE TEXT: This page helps you apply the truths you've explored. It's not enough to know what the Bible says. God's Word has the power to change your life.

LEADER GUIDE: This final section provides optional discussion starters and suggested questions to help anyone lead a group in reviewing each section of the personal study.



For helps on how to use *Explore the Bible*, tips on how to better lead groups, or additional ideas for leading, visit:
www.ministrygrid.com/web/ExploreTheBible.

➤ GROUP COMMITMENT

As you begin this study, it's important that everyone agrees to key group values. Clearly establishing the purpose of your time together will foster healthy expectations and help ease any uncertainties. The goal is to ensure that everyone has a positive experience leading to spiritual growth and true community. Initial each value as you discuss the following with your group.

☐ PRIORITY

Life is busy, but we value this time with one another and with God's Word. We choose to make being together a priority.

☐ PARTICIPATION

We're a group. Everyone is encouraged to participate. No one dominates.

☐ RESPECT

Everyone is given the right to his or her own opinions. All questions are encouraged and respected.

☐ TRUST

Each person humbly seeks truth through time in prayer and in the Bible. We trust God as the loving authority in our lives.

☐ CONFIDENTIALITY

Anything said in our meetings is never repeated outside the group without the permission of everyone involved. This commitment is vital in creating an environment of trust and openness.

☐ SUPPORT

Everyone can count on anyone in this group. Permission is given to call on one another at any time, especially in times of crisis. The group provides care for every member.

☐ ACCOUNTABILITY

We agree to let the members of our group hold us accountable to commitments we make in the loving ways we decide on. Questions are always welcome. Unsolicited advice, however, isn't permitted.

I agree to all the commitments.

Date

➤ GENERAL EDITOR



Dr. Tony Evans is one of America's most respected leaders in evangelical circles. He is a pastor, a best-selling author, and a frequent speaker at Bible conferences and seminars throughout the nation.

Dr. Evans has served as the senior pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship in Dallas, Texas, for more than 35 years. He is also the founder and president of The Urban Alternative, a ministry that seeks to restore hope and transform lives through the proclamation and application of God's Word.

Dr. Evans is the author of more than 50 books, including the following LifeWay short-term Bible studies: *Victory in Spiritual Warfare*, *Kingdom Man*, *Kingdom Agenda*, *It's Not Too Late*, *The Power of God's Names*, and *Horizontal Jesus*. For more information about these Bible studies, please visit lifeway.com/tonyevans.



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THE COMMISSION

God's commission includes the promise of His presence and the expectation of obedience.



➤ ABOUT THE BOOK OF JOSHUA

AUTHOR AND DATE

We can't say for certain who the author of the Book of Joshua is because he's not explicitly identified in the Bible. If Joshua didn't originally compose the book that bears his name, then it may be presumed that someone who personally knew him recorded the work.

Although much of the book may have been written during Joshua's lifetime, numerous references throughout the Book of Joshua make clear that the book was finalized after his lifetime, including the description of his death (see Josh. 24:29-33) and people, places, or memorials that remain "to this day" (see 4:9; 5:9; 6:25; 23:8). Joshua lived and led Israel sometime between 1490 and 1380 B.C.

PURPOSE

Joshua succeeded Moses and became Israel's leader during tumultuous times. He led the Israelites out of Moab, across the Jordan River, and into the promised land. Joshua had a great military mind. With the conquering of the centrally located cities of Jericho and Ai, he divided the promised land into halves. He conquered the southern half (the cities around Jerusalem) before turning his attention to the north (the city of Hazor). Once the land was conquered, Joshua divided it among the 12 tribes. The Israelites remained faithful to the Lord "throughout Joshua's lifetime" (24:31).

The Book of Joshua demonstrates that the Lord keeps His promises. To Abraham God promised, "To you and your future offspring I will give the land where you are residing" (Gen. 17:8). Centuries later, Joshua and the Israelites would once again live in the promised land.

This book also illustrates that the Lord gives rest to His people. After more than four hundred years of slavery in Egypt, the Israelites could enjoy God's rest in the land of promise.

"TRUE SUCCESS IS NOT
WHAT YOU HAVE DONE
COMPARED TO WHAT
OTHERS HAVE DONE, BUT
WHAT YOU HAVE DONE
COMPARED TO WHAT
YOU WERE SUPPOSED
TO DO."—*Tony Evans*

➤ JOSHUA 1:1-9

Think About It

Highlight the instructions God gave to Joshua. What do these instructions reveal about the importance of God's Word in Joshua's life?

Notice any repeated words or phrases in God's instructions to Joshua. What do these repeated words indicate about God's expectations of Joshua?

1 After the death of Moses the LORD's servant, the LORD spoke to Joshua son of Nun, who had served Moses: **2** "Moses My servant is dead. Now you and all the people prepare to cross over the Jordan to the land I am giving the Israelites. **3** I have given you every place where the sole of your foot treads, just as I promised Moses. **4** Your territory will be from the wilderness and Lebanon to the great Euphrates River—all the land of the Hittites—and west to the Mediterranean Sea. **5** No one will be able to stand against you as long as you live. I will be with you, just as I was with Moses. I will not leave you or forsake you. **6** Be strong and courageous, for you will distribute the land I swore to their fathers to give them as an inheritance. **7** Above all, be strong and very courageous to carefully observe the whole instruction My servant Moses commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right or the left, so that you will have success wherever you go. **8** This book of instruction must not depart from your mouth; you are to recite it day and night so that you may carefully observe everything written in it. For then you will prosper and succeed in whatever you do. **9** Haven't I commanded you: be strong and courageous? Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

► UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

USE THE FOLLOWING PAGES TO PREPARE FOR YOUR GROUP TIME.

The first chapter of Joshua serves as a transition from the preceding Book of Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy concluded with the death and burial of Moses (see 34:5-6); the Book of Joshua begins, “After the death of Moses the LORD’s servant, the LORD spoke to Joshua.” Deuteronomy 34:10 states, “No prophet has arisen again in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face.” Consequently, the Israelites undoubtedly experienced anxiety about the identity of Moses’ successor. Who would lead them now? Could this person be as effective as Moses? The Lord prepared Joshua for such a task: “Joshua son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him” (Deut. 34:9). As a constant companion to Moses, Joshua had the opportunity to observe Moses’ leadership style and decision-making approach, as well as his spiritual strengths and weaknesses. From an early period the Lord readied Joshua for this particular time and need.

Joshua proved to be a gifted leader. He molded 12 loosely connected tribes into a respected, even feared, military. He led the Hebrews to victory after victory against superior numbers and fortified cities. We recognize Joshua’s military prowess because his ambush at Ai (see Josh. 8) is one of the earliest examples of such a tactic in military history.

After conquering the land (see chaps. 1–12), Joshua successfully divided it among the tribes (see chaps. 13–19) and led them as they began to transition to an agricultural, non-nomadic lifestyle. What greater acclaim might be attributed to any leader other than the fact that “Israel worshiped Yahweh throughout Joshua’s lifetime” (24:31)?





➤ EXPLORE THE TEXT

A NEW LEADER (Joshua 1:1-5)

¹After the death of Moses the LORD’s servant, the LORD spoke to Joshua son of Nun, who had served Moses.

Moses, who knew the Lord in such an unusual manner (“face to face,” Deut. 34:10), led the Israelites out of Egypt and out of the bondage in which they had suffered for 430 years (see Ex. 12:40). The Lord gave the Israelites the law through Moses, as well as instructions for the construction of the tabernacle and the worship that was to take place in it. Moses led the Israelites through the 40-year wilderness wandering. He led them to the plains of Moab, east of the Jordan River, on the cusp of entering the promised land. Doubtless, the Israelites joyfully anticipated crossing the Jordan River and entering the land the Lord had promised their forefathers (see Deut. 34:4). The death of Moses must have suppressed much of this joy.

While Moses is described as the Lord’s servant, Joshua is described as one “who had served Moses” (Josh. 1:1). This participle in the original text is a different word from the noun previously translated as *servant*. This word communicates the idea of a chief assistant. Joshua didn’t serve Moses as a slave but as an assistant.

²“Moses My servant is dead. Now you and all the people prepare to cross over the Jordan to the land I am giving the Israelites. ³I have given you every place where the sole of your foot treads, just as I promised Moses.”

With the announcement that Moses was dead, God alerted His people to the present and pointed them to the future. The Lord communicated His plan as though the victory had already been accomplished. The Israelites had to fight for the land, but God had promised the land to Moses, leaving no doubt as to their victory.

⁴“Your territory will be from the wilderness and Lebanon to the great Euphrates River—all the land of the Hittites—and west to the Mediterranean Sea. ⁵No one will be able to stand against you as long as you live. I will be with you, just as I was with Moses. I will not leave you or forsake you.”

The expanse of the land must have been difficult for many of the Israelites to fathom. Fewer than 50 years earlier the ancestors of these same Hebrews dwelled as slaves in Egypt. Now they would have their own land—a large land.

The Hebrew name Joshua means *Yahweh is salvation*. The name Jesus is the Greek form of the name Joshua (see Matt. 1:21). As God gave the promised land to the Hebrews, He gave His Son to all humankind. Jesus, by His death and resurrection, offers salvation to everyone who believes (see Rom. 1:16).

How are God’s presence and His promises connected? Can you have His promises without His presence? Explain.

How can godly leaders be reminders of God’s presence?

A NEW TASK (Joshua 1:6)

⁶“Be strong and courageous, for you will distribute the land I swore to their fathers to give them as an inheritance.”

The Hebrew verb translated “Be strong” communicates the idea of physical strength. Joshua needed to be physically strong for the grueling events of the immediate future. The second verb, translated

KEY DOCTRINE

Scripture

The Scriptures are the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried.

BIBLE SKILL

Use other Scripture to help understand a Bible passage.

Read the following passages in your Bible: Exodus 17:8-16; 24:12-13; 32:17; 33:7-11; Numbers 27:18-23; Deuteronomy 31:23; 34:5-9.

What lessons do you think Joshua learned under Moses' leadership that prepared him to be Israel's new leader?

"Be courageous," communicates the idea of confidence. Joshua would soon face the fortified city of Jericho. The Lord instructed him to wage war not with sword and shield but with trumpets, or rams' horns (see 6:13). Where would Joshua find the boldness to undertake this task in such an unexpected, even irrational, manner? He would find boldness in the fact that the Lord had commissioned him and promised to be with him.

Both of these verbs, "Be strong and courageous," are commands in the original Hebrew. The Lord didn't merely ask Joshua to be strong and courageous; the Lord commanded Joshua to be strong and courageous.

Why should we be strong and courageous as we pursue God's calling for our lives? What if God calls you to a task bigger than you could ever imagine?

A NEW TRUST (Joshua 1:7-9)

⁷"Above all, be strong and very courageous to carefully observe the whole instruction My servant Moses commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right or the left, so that you will have success wherever you go."

Using the same two verbs as in verse 6, the Lord also charged Joshua to be strong and courageous in following His law. The phrase "carefully observe" translates two verbs in Hebrew. The first verb can be rendered as *keep* or *watch*. The second verb conveys the idea of *do*. God instructed Joshua to keep and do His whole instruction. With the whole instruction the Lord didn't give Joshua the option of choosing to observe some of His laws while choosing to neglect other laws. Neither do we have the option of choosing to obey only the parts of the Bible that we find to be easy, convenient, or agreeable to us. God expects us to be fully obedient to His entire written revelation.

⁸"This book of instruction must not depart from your mouth; you are to recite it day and night so that you may carefully observe everything written in it. For then you will prosper

and succeed in whatever you do. ⁹Haven't I commanded you: be strong and courageous? Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

Joshua's reciting the book of instruction would naturally result in his awareness of its content. God wants us to fill our mind with His Word (see Ps. 1:2). When we view life through the lens of God's Word, we begin to see life as God does.

The importance of carefully observing this book of instruction can't be overstated. The Lord told Joshua that his success would depend on his obedience to God's Word. The success of believers today in serving the Lord hinges on our obedience to the Word of the Lord.

Finally, the Lord told Joshua not to be afraid or discouraged, because God promised to be with him in whatever he did.

Our calling and commission may not be the same as Joshua's, but we can still trust God and His Word in all areas of our lives. When we accept the Lord's commission, trust in His Word, and count on His presence, we'll find courage to face whatever He calls us to do.

Why is it necessary for a leader to constantly be reminded of the truths found in God's Word? Should constantly being reminded of God's truths be any less important for those who aren't leaders? Explain.



► OBEY THE TEXT

- Believers can trust God to keep all of His promises, with Jesus being the ultimate promise kept (see Isa. 53).
- When facing challenges, believers should draw strength and courage from God's presence.
- Believers don't have the option of obeying only a part of God's Word. God expects His people to obey all of His Word in every area of life.

List your favorite promises of God. Identify ways each promise you listed is tied to God's presence. What distractions do you need to eliminate from your life so that you can live more intentionally in the awareness of God's presence?

Share with your Bible-study group a challenging circumstance you faced when Jesus' presence and power sustained you. How does hearing the stories of other believers encourage you?

List things you're currently doing to discover and remind yourself of the truths found in God's Word. What actions do you need to take to more readily discover and be reminded of God's truth?



MEMORIZE

No one will be able to stand against you as long as you live. I will be with you, just as I was with Moses. I will not leave you or forsake you.—Joshua 1:5

USE THE SPACE PROVIDED TO MAKE OBSERVATIONS AND RECORD PRAYER REQUESTS DURING THE GROUP EXPERIENCE FOR THIS SESSION.

MY THOUGHTS

Record insights and questions from the group experience.

MY RESPONSE

Note specific ways you'll put into practice the truth explored this week.

MY PRAYERS

List specific prayer needs and answers to remember this week.



➤ GETTING STARTED

OPENING OPTIONS: Choose one of the following to open the group discussion.

WEEKLY QUOTATION DISCUSSION STARTER: “True success is not what you have done compared to what others have done, but what you have done compared to what you were supposed to do.”

—Tony Evans

- What’s your initial response to this week’s quotation?
- How can comparison make us feel better? How can it make us feel worse?
- In the Bible the Israelites and their leaders constantly faced the temptation to compare themselves to the nations around them, to compare their situations to their desires, and to wrestle with whether they believed God’s commands were worth obeying. This study begins with a man who chose to trust God and to do what God said he was supposed to do.

CREATIVE ACTIVITY: Before the group meets, find a favorite movie clip in which someone is given a mission (for example, *Lord of the Rings*, *Top Gun*, etc.). Be careful to avoid a clip with offensive language. When the group arrives, play the clip and then use the following questions to open the group discussion.

- What was the challenge presented in this clip? Why was it important? How did characters respond?
- When have you been given a task that felt overwhelming? How did you respond?
- Today we’ll meet a man who was given a major responsibility. He had to step up and lead a nation.

➤ UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

PROVIDE BACKGROUND: Briefly introduce group members to the Book of Joshua, pointing out the major themes and any information that will help them understand Joshua 1:1-9 (see pp. 7 and 9). Then, to help people personally connect today’s context with the original context, use the following questions and statements.

- Moses was one of the most influential men in history. What do you know about his life?
- Following in the footsteps of Moses, Joshua was called by God to be the next leader of Israel. If you were in Joshua’s position, what emotions would you experience? What would be exciting about the opportunity? What would be intimidating about the opportunity?
- Today we’ll be introduced to Joshua, a man who led Israel after the death of one of its greatest leaders. He may have felt a mixture of excitement to experience more of God’s miraculous power, inadequacy to live up to Moses’ leadership, and intimidation by the situation. In the midst of this transition, God gave Joshua a specific mission. God’s commission always includes the promise of His presence and the expectation of obedience.

➤ EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ THE BIBLE: Ask a volunteer to read Joshua 1:1-9.

DISCUSS: Use the following questions to discuss group members' initial reactions to the text.

- What immediately stands out to you in this text as a theme or primary point? What do you find encouraging, timely, or convicting?
- What word is repeatedly used to describe Moses? Why is this characteristic still important for leaders today? Why did God remind Joshua of His relationship with Moses in verses 3 and 5?
- Identify each thing Joshua was commanded to do. Identify each thing God promised to do. Why is it significant that God gave both commands and promises?
- What can we conclude from the repetition of two primary commands given to Joshua? What's the connection between God's instruction and a believer's strength and courage? What potential sources of discouragement would Joshua face?
- What's the relationship between God's presence and His promises? Can we experience God's promises apart from His presence?
- What else does this text teach us about God? About ourselves?
- What other questions or observations do you have?

NOTE: Provide ample time for group members to share responses and questions about the text. Don't feel pressured to prioritize the printed agenda over group members' personal experiences. If time allows, discuss responses to the questions in the personal reading.

➤ OBEY THE TEXT

RESPOND: Foster an environment of openness and action. Help individuals apply biblical truth to specific areas of personal thought, attitude, and/or behavior.

- Name some people who've had a spiritual influence on your life. How can godly leaders serve as reminders of God's presence?
- What challenging circumstance have you faced when Jesus' presence and power sustained you? How does hearing the stories of other believers encourage you?
- What are you currently doing to remind yourself of the truths found in God's Word?

PRAY: Close by praying for the courage to obey God and to set an example of faith for others in your life.