

Trust His Word

Joshua 10:6-14

6 Then the men of Gibeon sent word to Joshua in the camp at Gilgal: “Don’t abandon your servants. Come quickly and save us! Help us, for all the Amorite kings living in the hill country have joined forces against us.” **7** So Joshua and his whole military force, including all the fighting men, came from Gilgal. **8** The LORD said to Joshua, “Do not be afraid of them, for I have handed them over to you. Not one of them will be able to stand against you.” **9** So Joshua caught them by surprise, after marching all night from Gilgal. **10** The LORD threw them into confusion before Israel. He defeated them in a great slaughter at Gibeon, chased them through the ascent of Beth-horon, and struck them down as far as Azekah and Makkedah. **11** As they fled before Israel, the LORD threw large hailstones on them from the sky along the descent of Beth-horon all the way to Azekah, and they died. More of them died from the hail than the Israelites killed with the sword. **12** On the day the LORD gave the Amorites over to the Israelites, Joshua spoke to the LORD in the presence of Israel: “Sun, stand still over Gibeon, and moon, over the Valley of Aijalon.” **13** And the sun stood still and the moon stopped until the nation took vengeance on its enemies. Isn’t this written in the Book of Jashar? So the sun stopped in the middle of the sky and delayed its setting almost a full day. **14** There has been no day like it before or since, when the LORD listened to the voice of a man, because the LORD fought for Israel.

Exploration

At the onset of the Book of Joshua, God challenged Joshua three times to “be strong and courageous.” The young leader had been charged with the enormous task of leading God’s people into the promised land, a task wrought with fierce opposition. God had declared to Joshua that the promised land was his, that He had already given Joshua the land (Josh. 1:4-5). This, however, did not mean that Joshua could walk into the land, stake a flag in it, and claim it for Israel. Taking the promised land would not be easy. It would require tremendous strength and courage. Taking the promised land required an active trust in and obedience to God. The fact that the nations around Israel did not trust the Lord led them to be controlled by their own fears. In contrast to these nations, we will see that Joshua’s active trust in and obedience to God freed him from being controlled by his fears. The same is true for the mission God has given us today. Making disciples and living for God’s glory requires an active trust in His promises and active obedience to His commands. When we actively trust God’s Word, we can engage in the mission He has given us without fear.

CONTEXT (JOSH. 7:1–12:24)

Joshua sent spies from Jericho to the city of Ai on a reconnaissance mission. The men returned and advised Joshua not to dispatch the entire Hebrew army to Ai. They believed two or three thousand Hebrew soldiers could conquer Ai. Following their advice, Joshua sent “about 3,000 men” (7:4). The soldiers at Ai drove Joshua’s army from the battlefield, killing “about 36 of them” (7:5). Naturally, Joshua asked the Lord “why?” (7:7). By a process of elimination, Joshua determined the reason (7:14-15). Achan, a Hebrew soldier, violated the command recorded in 6:17-19 by taking goods from Ai. Achan and his family were stoned to death. With Achan’s sin revealed and removed, Joshua attacked and conquered Ai. After conquering Jericho and Ai, Joshua and the Hebrews now controlled central Israel.

When the inhabitants of Gibeon heard what Joshua had done at Jericho and Ai, they devised a plan based on deception to enter into a treaty with the Israelites. When Joshua and the Israelites discovered the deception, they determined to enslave the Gibeonites rather than kill them (9:16-27).

A coalition of southern kings joined together to attack Gibeon when they discovered the Gibeonites had made peace with Israel (10:1-5). The Gibeonites sent word to Joshua, who came to their aid and defeated the southern coalition (10:6-27). During this battle Joshua called to the sun to stand still, and the Lord honored his request (10:12-14). Joshua then led his army in a conquest of Canaan’s southern cities (10:28-43).

With central and southern Israel in his grasp, Joshua concentrated on the remaining territory: the north (chap. 11). Again, the enemy, “as numerous as the sand on the seashore” (11:4), united against the Hebrews. In the end, Joshua defeated all these kings (11:12). Chapter 12 records an extensive list of territories conquered by Joshua and the Hebrews.

Conversation

Discuss what students discovered as they explored this session's passage. Specifically, turn their attention to the following quick response questions and guide students to share their answers.

› **Share about a time when you missed an opportunity to do something great because you were afraid.**

› **How can we stop from letting our fears control us? Explain.**

In Session 1, we discussed how our fears often dictate our attitudes and actions. Too often we let our fears control us, and as a result, we neglect or miss out on opportunities to glorify God and advance His mission. Three times in Joshua 1, God challenged the young leader to be strong and courageous. A massive, overwhelming task lay before him—the task of taking the promised land, which was filled with fortified cities and intimidating armies. In Joshua 10, we read the account of five armies who banded together to attack Gibeon, Israel's ally, in hope of hindering Israel from gaining further ground in the promised land. In today's session, we will see that Joshua embraced this task by trusting in God's Word—remembering His promise to give the land to them and to be with them. By actively trusting what God said, Joshua was able to engage in the mission God had given him without fear.

JOSHUA 10:1-5 (CONTEXT)

Ask a couple of students to read the first five verses of Joshua 10 in order to understand the context of today's passage.

› **What motivated the king of Jerusalem to join forces with four other kings in attacking Gibeon? What was he hoping to accomplish?**

› **How does the description of the inhabitants of Gibeon in verse 2 compare with their actions in Joshua 9:3-15? What was the king of Jerusalem afraid of?**

›› **ITEM 5 (LEADER PACK)** Draw students' attention to the **Joshua 1:9** pack item which includes a diagram of the walls of Jericho and God's command to Joshua to be strong and very courageous. Joshua had taken heed of this command in his previous fights against Jericho and Ai. Once again, he would be challenged to trust in the Lord as Israel faced the challenge of going to battle against five armies.

Conversation

This was not the first time that multiple kings in Canaan banded together against the Israelites. In Joshua 9:1-2, we see six kingdoms aligning together against Israel after hearing about Joshua's massive victories against Jericho and Ai. At this time, Jerusalem was not yet controlled by the Israelites and its king, Adoni-zedek, feared the Israelites as reports spread of Israel's crushing military victories. He feared attacking Gibeon alone because Gibeon was a great city, but more than that, he wanted to hinder Israel from advancing further into Canaan. He was too scared of the Israelites to attack them outright, so he built a coalition to attack Gibeon, Israel's newly acquired ally. While Adoni-zedek saw Gibeon as a city full of warriors, just prior in Joshua 9 we learn that the Gibeonites were so scared to battle Israel that they tricked Joshua into making a treaty with them. Emphasize to students how fear was motivating all of the leaders in this story except for Joshua.

JOSHUA 10:6-11

Joshua's treaty with Gibeon was built on a lie. The Gibeonites disguised themselves and pretended that they had traveled to the promised land to worship the Israelites' God. Viewing them as inhabitants of some distant country, Joshua did not see them as a threat to his mission of entering the promised land and quickly made a covenant with Gibeon without consulting God (Josh. 9:14).

› **How did the men of Gibeon respond to the coalition of kings who were plotting to attack them (v. 6)? What was motivating them?**

› **How did Joshua respond to their cry for help (vv. 7-8)? What does this tell us about Joshua?**

Like Adoni-zedek and the other Amorite kings, the men of Gibeon were motivated by fear and as a result, they cried out in desperation to Joshua to come to their rescue against the five kings that are poised to attack them. Joshua, however, stands out in this story. The young leader was asked by his unreliable, lying allies to come to their aid in a battle in which they would be greatly outnumbered. Given that the men of Gibeon had previously deceived Joshua, we would almost expect Joshua to leave them to the mercy of the Amorites. Joshua, however, did not entertain any such thoughts. The men of Gibeon asked for help and Joshua immediately gathered his army and went to their aid. This tells us that Joshua was not only a man of his word, but also that his trust was ultimately in God.

Leader Prep

One cannot miss the panic in the message when the Gibeonites informed Joshua, now back at Gilgal, that all the Amorite kings living in the hill country have joined forces against us. The words *come quickly* highlight the urgency of the matter. The people of Gibeon, in all probability outnumbered and facing potential annihilation, remembered the promises of protection Joshua had given them. They pleaded with Joshua not to abandon them, but to rescue them from their attackers.

JOSHUA 10:7-8

Undoubtedly and probably painfully, Joshua remembered the commitment he made with Gibeon. Would he honor that commitment? Modern readers might argue that nothing bound Joshua to the treaty because the Gibeonites had acted in such a devious manner. Realizing the circumstances under which the Gibeonites operated, who could blame Joshua for ignoring his commitment? We might even argue that abandoning the commitment was not only acceptable but warranted. But Joshua did not think that way. He stayed true to his word. He moved his military force out of Gilgal in route to aid the Gibeonites.

Joshua's commitment demonstrates the importance of the spoken word in the Old Testament world. The Hebrews believed they could not retract a spoken word. Remember, for example, Isaac and his sons, Esau and Jacob (Gen. 27). As the firstborn, a double portion of the family's wealth should have gone to Esau. But Rebekah and Jacob tricked Isaac into giving the blessing to Jacob. Contemporary believers might think the incident could have been resolved by simply retracting the commitment to Jacob and giving the double portion of the estate to Esau. But Isaac did not do that, because spoken words could not be retracted.

Not only did Joshua honor his word, the Lord honored His word as well. The Lord instructed Joshua not to be afraid of them. The words I have handed them over to you remind us of God's assurance to Joshua regarding Jericho (Josh. 6:2). The victory over Jericho was so certain that God spoke of it as a past event. Likewise, in God's mind, Israel's battle against the southern kings had an outcome that was not in doubt: Not one of them will be able to stand against you.

God's words to Joshua encourage us to remember God's past work in our lives. Remembering His faithfulness will help us trust God for present and future trials.



Once again the text emphasizes that the Lord fought for Israel (v. 10). Because God was on their side, no enemy could stand against them. God intervenes on behalf of His people. His ultimate act of intervention was when He sent Jesus to die on the cross for our behalf. Christ died for our sin, was buried, and was raised on the third day. As a result, we are able to say with Paul, "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" (1 Cor. 15:57)

Conversation

› What did God promise Joshua (v. 8)? What does this tell us about Him?

Joshua kept his word. He decided, no matter the cost, that it was important to keep the covenant he had made in God's name. We live in a day and time when promises are easily made and more easily broken in marriage, politics, and friendships. But God still honors the kind of integrity that abides by His Word.

› How did Joshua respond to God's promise (v. 9)? What did God do as a result (vv. 10-11)?

God stepped in to fight on behalf of His people in an incredible way. Amazingly, more people died from the hailstorm God sent than because of the Israelites. When God works like this, He does so in a way that the only option is to give Him glory. But He wasn't finished displaying His great power over His creation.

JOSHUA 10:12-14

While the battle was essentially won after God struck down many of the Amorites with hail stones and what was left of the Amorite armies were retreating, Joshua wasn't finished. He prayed to God to bring this battle fully and finally to a close in such a way that would demonstrate His ultimate power and supreme glory. Joshua was focused solely on the mission God had given him of leading God's people into the promised land.

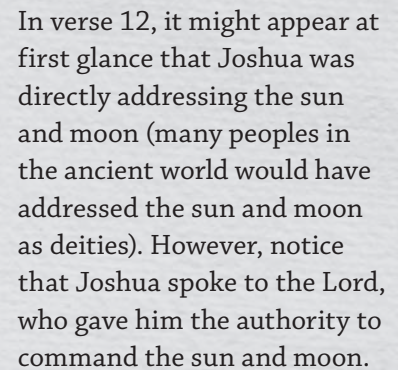
› Why is it important to see that Joshua prayed this big, outlandish prayer in front of the people of Israel? What does it indicate about his faith?

› Notice, too, that Joshua continued to fight. Why do you think he did this?

Joshua knew that the armies were on the run. This was a moment when the armies could be destroyed and open up the land for the people. But the day was escaping, so Joshua boldly prayed and God provided an incredible miracle for the people. The sun stopped in the sky so the battle could continue. Though the victory was given, it had to be taken hold of, and that's just what the Israelites did. Like them, we know ultimately that the victory has been given to us through Jesus. Even though the ultimate victory of sin and death has been won, we still have to take hold of the victory that God has given. When we do, we recognize that the battle truly does belong to the Lord—this realization gives us the confidence we need to live on mission for Him.

JOSHUA 10:9-14

The writer of the Book of Joshua communicated his amazement at the miracle with the words: there has been no day like it before or since. But the greater source of his amazement seems to be the fact that the Lord listened to the voice of a man.



Application

CENTRAL TRUTH

When we actively trust God's Word, we can engage in the mission He has given us without fear.

➤➤ **ITEM 8 (LEADER PACK)** Remind students of God's promise to establish His people in His land that goes all the way back to the garden (Gen 2). by referencing the **Kinsman Redeemer** pack item. Israel's campaign to take the promised land was nothing new, but was rooted in ancient promises that God had not forgotten.

NOW WHAT?

Consider the following application questions with students. Provide them time to journal their answers in their Personal Study Guides, or time to share their answers with the group.

- **In what areas of life are you letting fear control you? What would it look like for you to actively trust God in those areas?**

- **What in your life keeps you from trusting God and His Word? How can you overcome these distractions?**

- **What battle are you facing in which you need to take hold of the victory God has already given you in Christ?**

Every time Joshua and the Israelites were threatened by their enemies and had a battle looming, God reminded Joshua of His presence and His promise to give him the promised land. In other words, God was telling Joshua that the battle was already won. Christ does something similar for believers. He has sealed our eternal future through His death and resurrection (1 Pet. 1:3-6) and has rendered Satan powerless over us by paying the penalty of our sins (2 Cor. 5:21; Col. 2:15).

- **How does trusting in God free us from fear? What actions do you need to take to trust God at school, in your activities, and at home?**

PERSONAL CHALLENGE

Finish your group time with these thoughts and encourage students to memorize the verse listed for this session. Memorizing God's Word allows it to dwell in us and allows Him to speak through His Word in our times of need. Also encourage your group to take advantage of the Keep on Digging section in their Personal Study Guides and to take the truths of this section and apply them to their lives.

› **Dwell:** Read Psalm 46. Where did the psalmist turn in his time of trouble? What can you learn from his prayer? How should the promises of God in this prayer give you strength in your day-to-day life? Set aside some time to meditate on the truths of this Psalm, particularly how God's infinite power and certain promises empower you to live on mission for Him.

› **Memorize:** Joshua 1:7

› **Pray:** Thank God for His promises and His Word which empower us to live without fear. Ask Him to help you lean on the promises in His Word, and to trust in the power He promises to provide as you seek to live on mission for Him. Ask Him to help you have the heart of Joshua, who was unswervingly focused on the mission God had given him.

KEEP ON DIGGING

Read the following verses, as well as the surrounding context verses if time allows. Journal what each verse tells you about God and what it tells you about your fears. Then journal a prayer to God asking Him to help you look to Him for the strength necessary to overcome your fears and live for His glory.

› Deuteronomy 31:6

› Psalm 118:6-7

› Isaiah 41:10

› Luke 12:22-26

› Philippians 4:6-7

› 1 John 4:18



For an expository verse-by-verse sermon outline/discussion guide that complements this session with a study in Galatians, see lifeway.com/ETBWIN17JJR. For **free** training, go to MinistryGrid.com/web/ExploreTheBible.