



NOT ALONE

Courage for the Journey

GOING DEEPER
A STUDY IN JOSHUA

 Bible Center

Going Deeper: Joshua 1-5

A Devotional Study Guide



God's people are always on the move, but they are **not alone**. There is a day of rest coming when we settle into an eternity of enjoying fellowship, peace, and worship forever. Until then, God's kingdom is ever expanding and growing. The Gospel is taken to the edges of the kingdom by his people: the church. Great leaders will come, others will struggle. Each has a mission to chase and a contribution to give. In all circumstances and paths, God's presence provides **courage for the journey**.

As we enter into the book of Joshua, the greatest leader in the history of Israel dies and passes on the mantle of leadership to Joshua. Moses and the people of Israel were redeemed out of Egypt by the mighty hand of God through miracles, wondrous acts, and the Lord's abiding presence. God had supplied His people with the numbers and resources necessary to accomplish the mission of taking the land that He had promised their forefathers. In doubt and fear, they stood at the edge of the promised land and looked upon giants that seemed bigger than God. God sends this faithless generation into the wilderness to suffer death as the next generation is raised up to take the land. As they wandered the desert, an entire generation falls under God's hand of judgment.

Now again, at the edge of the Promised Land, a new leader stands in front of God's people. A clear mission has been given - from the redemption out of Egypt to the conquest of the Promised Land! This generation is marked by faith as Joshua and Caleb set the tone.

Even as leaders change, God's presence remains constant. Faith rests not in the leader, but in the Lord of the leader. Never do we look to our own hands for the power and ability to accomplish the mission – we look to the God who put us on mission.

As we study the pages of Joshua, we are asking God to grow our faith in Him. A beautiful picture of God working in and through His people is painted. We are studying Joshua as a church, because God has raised up new leaders, He has given us a clear mission, and we recognize that Jesus' presence is ever with us. BCC can be strong and courageous because Jesus sets our direction, supplies our needs, and prepares us for battle.

In God's power and presence,

may we live on mission and become

A Church that Charleston Can't Live Without

On the journey with you,

Pastor Mike Graham

Mike Graham, *Pastor of Group Life*

Introduction to Joshua

Context – Historical and Spiritual Setting

Read each passage, make observations, and answer any given questions.

God's Promises

Genesis 12:1-3 – What promises did God make to Abram?

Were the promises given in these verses based upon any actions, beliefs, or efforts of Abram?

Covenants can take several forms. Covenants are often made between kings and vassals (one with great authority and one with far less). Covenants can be contingent upon particular actions and commitments (stipulations). Other covenants can take on an unconditional element where the greater participant commits to a certain set of promises without a necessary response from the lesser. God makes both unconditional and conditional covenants with his people throughout the generations, circumstances, and stages of history. Here, God makes a unilateral, unconditional covenant with Abram. The fulfillment of these promises is based on the character and commitment of God alone – It Will Happen. Thus, these promises set the stage for the rest of the Old Testament.

God's People

Israel was brought to the edge of the Promised Land and, in fear and faithlessness, doubted God and refused to enter. God sent that generation into the wilderness for 40 years to wander and die and raised up the next generation. This new generation is now entering Moab and is approaching the edge of the Promised Land.

Deuteronomy 29:10-13 – Describe the stage being set:

All of Israel is brought before the presence of the Lord. A conditional covenant is about to be introduced.

29:13 – What is God's intention for the covenant?

Why would God remind them of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? What emotions would this inspire? How would it affect their perspective?

God's Covenant

Deuteronomy 30:15-20 – What does God lay before his people?

What would it look like to choose life? How would both the heart and one's actions be involved?

What would it look like for them to choose death? What would be the consequences?

God's Plan

Deuteronomy 31:1-6 – Is victory in question?

What is the significance of God going before them? How should this impact their hearts and attitudes?

We know that God is always with us, so why do we still struggle with fear (sharing the Gospel with that friend, having that hard conversation, telling someone about my sin, reconciling with someone who has deeply wronged me...)?

Can you think of a verse that encourages you and inspires faith in your hard moments? Who could you encourage with this verse? Do you have it memorized?

God's Man

Deuteronomy 31:7-8 - Who witnesses this transfer of leadership?

What is Moses' role in passing the baton?

God has called the people to "be strong and courageous" (31:6); here Joshua is given the same charge. What happens if the leadership loses this heart of courage?

How can you better encourage and support your church leaders?

Joshua 1

1:1 – What significant transition is now happening in the life of Israel?

What does it feel like to lose a beloved leader?

Deuteronomy 34:8 – How did the nation of Israel respond?

Deuteronomy 34:1-7 – Describe these last moments of Moses' life:

Who buried Moses?

Deuteronomy 34:9 – What do we learn about Joshua?

How has God set him apart and prepared him for leadership?

Deuteronomy 34:10-12 – Tensions always exist in the life of a Christian. How do we properly keep the balance of honoring what God has done and preparing for what He is about to do?

What happens to a church when they overly embrace their past and don't look to prepare for the future? For the next generation?

What happens when the new generation forgets to honor, learn from and respect the previous generation?

How can Bible Center do both well?

If a church is declining and embracing only methods that worked in a previous generation - what is happening? What is the future of this church? What changes would need to be made?

Joshua 1:2-3 – What is God's role in taking the land?

1:5 – What is the basis for their success? 1:6 – How should this affect their hearts?

The land can be viewed more as a gift to be received than a goal achieved. It is the result of a promise not an adventure of unknown outcome. In our Christian life, we are given promises, and at the same time called to action.

Philippians 1:6 – What is God's promise?

Philippians 2:12 – What is our role?

Philippians 2:13 – What is God's role?

God's promise and presence frees us to live in faith, taking steps of action and courage, trusting in God's ever-extended hand of protection.

Joshua 1:6 – What prevents us from living a life of strength and courage?

What would your neighborhood look like if you and all the Christians who lived there lived on mission with strength and courage?

1:7-8 – How can courage be connected to obedience in God's Word?

The law (in addition to the stone tablets) was written on scrolls and kept in the ark. It was periodically read to all the whole nation. They were to keep it in their hearts and talk about it together. We have dozens of translations: Bibles for nurses, moms, mechanics..., study Bibles, journaling Bibles, Bible apps, Bible verse magnets... there is never a moment when we do not have access to God's Word.

Yet, how often does it "depart from our mouth?" How often do we turn to the left and the right to walk our own path? What are your next steps for bringing the Bible back to the center of your life?

What is your present form of Scriptural study? Are you motivated to do it? Have you been consistent?

How can you improve your consistency? How could others play a role in helping you grow in your knowledge and study of God's Word?

What role can your community group play?

2 Timothy 2:2 – If you have been studying God’s Word for years, who are you building into? How are you discipling the next generations? Are you helping anyone else learn how to study God’s Word?

1:9 – Is “be strong and courageous” just a slogan for the people?

Do we recognize this as a command for today? How are we being called to strength and courage in this phase of our life, in our current circumstances, and in our difficult relationships?

2 Corinthians 5:20 – How does strength and courage fit into living out this verse? What are ways that we fill our time and expend our energy so that we avoid being a witness to our friends, co-workers, and neighbors?

What courageous step could you take this week in communicating God’s love through word or deed?

There are times when we will even use personal study, church involvement, and our devotions as an excuse for not having time to spend time with people who still need to hear about Jesus. How can we bring balance?

The people of Israel were called to a devotion to the knowledge of God’s Word and to the conquest of the Promised Land. Our lives must also have a balance of spiritual nourishment and spiritual exercise. God’s Word will impact our hearts and then we must give it away to others.

1:10-15 – The Reubenites and Gadites and the half-tribe of Manaseh were promised the lands on the east side of the Jordan. They were already standing on the land that God had promised them. Yet, they were called to arms and to participation in the conquest. Why would Joshua require this?

What does this tell us about how the people of Israel (the nation as a whole) were to view themselves?

How do we see the power of family at work in our church? In our personal life and spiritual growth?

Can you think of a time when you (and the ministry with which you are involved) had to support and assist another ministry? What might be a way for you and your group to go to war for another ministry in the church?

1:16-18 – How have the people responded to Joshua's leadership?

What would happen to those that did not follow his leadership?

There is a time to honor the past and grieve the transition of relationships. There is also a time to recognize the opportunity in front of us. Can you write out our BCC mission?

What is our BCC vision?

What is your next step in becoming more involved with this mission? Where do you need additional strength and courage?

Joshua 2

2:1 – Do you remember what happened the last time they sent spies into the land? (Numbers 13:25-33)

2:2 – There was a good chance that this city was on high alert based upon Rahab's report given in 2:9-11. Jericho was not large, about 6 acres in size. It is possible that there were only 2000-3000 residences in this town. Would it have been hard to pick out who the two new dudes were wandering around the city?

2:3-7 – Why would Rahab have taken this chance with the men?

What kind of risk would Rahab have been taking by hiding and protecting enemy spies?

2:3 – What does the king's response to this report tell us about his view of Israel and their God?

2:9-11 – How has the knowledge of God spread to other nations?

What is their response to this knowledge?

How does Rahab express faith?

Hebrews 11:31 – How is Rahab honored in this passage?

James 2:25 – How do we see faith and works working together?

Matthew 1:5 – Who is Rahab's great-great-great grandson?

What does this teach us about the Lord that he would place Rahab (a foreigner and a harlot) in the lineage of Christ?

What are some examples of ways we judge people based upon their ethnicity or profession instead of their heart?

What does that communicate about the church when we wrongly judge, make assumptions, and look down on others?

What do we learn about God's heart for the nations through Rahab's faith? What were some of the reasons that God worked such miraculous wonders during this period in the history of Israel?

How was God preparing both Israel and the world for Israel's unique role of "God's people?"

2:12-14 – What was her request? How did this continue to show her faith?

2:15-21 – What was their contingency to honoring their pledge? Does this remind you of anything else you have read in the Old Testament?

2:22-24 – The first time Israel stood on the edge of the Promised Land, the spies returned downcast and doubtful. How did Rahab's faith inspire these spies?

1 Corinthians 1:26-29 – How has this story of Rahab influenced your understanding of this passage?

Joshua 3

3:1-3 – The ark had been located behind the veil in the tabernacle (Exodus 40:20). Entering into the presence of the ark outside of God's restrictions could end in death (Exodus 16:2). Moses would speak with the Lord and the Lord would respond, speaking from above the ark (Numbers 7:89).

What was in the ark of the covenant? (Hebrews 9:4)

During the exodus out of Egypt, how did God lead and direct His people by day? By night?

The ark represented the presence of God. No longer did the Lord use a cloud or pillar of fire, He used the ark that contained the commandments, Aaron's staff, and a jar of manna that reminded the people of God's holiness, power, and provision. Why do you suppose only certain people could carry the ark?

3:4 - The people were called to follow the ark, but to also to keep 1,000 yards between them and the ark at all times. What does this teach them about their relationship with God?

3:5-6 – "Joshua addresses all the people for the first time. He commands them to *Consecrate yourselves*, to prepare for the next day. This instruction again evokes the image of Israel at Mount Sinai, where God commanded Moses to consecrate Israel" (Hess, 110). Why would God want to reset such an atmosphere?

Deuteronomy 31:24-26 – Israel receives the Law at Mount Sinai in Exodus 20 as they begin their journey to the Promised Land. How does the Lord create a similar situation for this generation? What is He emphasizing for them?

1:7 – After addressing the people for the first time, the Lord speaks to Joshua in verse 7. What does the Lord intend to do for Joshua in the crossing of the Jordan?

Why is this so important for Joshua and the people of Israel?

How is God identifying and establishing the leaders in our church?

Setting the Stage

3:8-11 – Describe the stage that the Lord is setting before the people of Israel:

Everyone is gathered! He even creates anticipation as the priests stand at the brink of the Jordan, He stands and addresses the people, and all wait to see what happens when the priests first place their feet in the water. What does the Lord desire to demonstrate?

How should this experience shape and form their view of God? How does it prepare them for what is to come?

What kind of thoughts should this experience bring to mind months from now when the Israelites are knee deep in war and conquest?

What are some moments in your life from which you draw faith and confidence in God?

3:12 – Multiple times the Lord emphasizes the unity of the many families (tribes) that make up one people (Israel). How well do we do at making this emphasis? How have you worked toward building unity in the church?

What should be done if you find someone creating disunity in the church?

Crossing the Jordan

The Jordan is not a small stream. “The river Jordan had a separating rather than connecting function, running through a deep gorge which may be called the earth’s deepest valley. The Jordan flows into the Dead Sea, which lies 1,286 feet below sea level... The slopes are generally steep and sudden, sometimes forming huge precipices. Also note 3:15, which points to the river’s swollen condition at the time of the crossing” (Woudstra, 58).

3:13 – Notice that the priests had to first put their feet into the Jordan before the waters would stop flowing. This would have been a step down a steep bank holding onto the most precious object in the nation’s possession.

The miracle was only going to happen **after** they took that first dangerous and challenging step of faith! ***Only with wet feet will they enjoy dry ground!*** What does this teach us about how God can work?

Does He always open a door to simply walk through?

What might it look like for you to turn that knob or take a step in a direction that feels scary in order to follow the Lord?

Is God calling you into a deeper walk with Him? What steps might you take?

Is God calling you into deeper relationships in His body? What conversations do you need to have?

Is God leading you to get more involved with the church? Where can you serve more? What skills or gifts are you presently not using to benefit and bless the church?

3:14-17 – God clearly communicates and even demonstrates (with the ark leading the people) that He will go ahead of the people to lead and protect. At the same time, God's people are called to stand up, move forward in faith, and actively follow God's lead. How does the church at times get this confused?

What do we need to communicate to inactive Christians?

2 Timothy 2:1-6 – What kind of life are we called to live as followers of Christ?

Joshua 4

What are some of your favorite family memories from when you were a child?

Why do you suppose those are the memories that stick out to you?

Our strongest memories are often connected to sights (witnessing the event), sounds (words, laughter, yelling...), and emotions (joy, fear, anger...) – why would this have been his design? Why do you think God created us to become storehouses of memories?

4:1-7 – Why would Joshua have had one man from each tribe?

The stones were to remain with the men where they lodged until the building of the memorial. Each tribe carried a stone until arriving at Gilgal. Only when the men from each tribe came together would the memorial have been ready to build. How does this show the unity of God's people? In what way would this have reminded the tribes of their common family heritage?

What things has God given to remind us that we are all part of his one family? Do any verses come to mind?

From where did they collect the stones? How would this have made the memorial more significant and memorable?

4:8-13 – Where did Joshua set up the first memorial?

4:14 – How did God lift up Joshua as the leader?

What were the people's response to Joshua?

Hebrews 13:7 – What does it look like to follow God's leaders today?

4:15-18 – The miracle finishes as the priests' feet leave the riverbed. The author clearly marks each aspect of the miracle. Building anticipation, articulating each step, and then leading to the dramatic conclusion of the water being held back until the ark exits the river. Why would God want every aspect highlighted and recorded at this stage of their history?

4:19-24 – They make their last stop in Gilgal before moving on to Jericho. The conquest is soon to begin. Faith is about to turn into action. Here they set up their memorial of 12 stones. How will this monument influence future generations?

Our family keeps a "treasure chest" of God's faithfulness (It's actually an ugly tackle box). We have pictures, stories, symbolic objects, letters... I will periodically pull it out, pick out things, and tell stories.

How can you set up memorials for your family (and the next generations) to proclaim the power and goodness of God?

4:23 - What is the significance and importance of connecting this event to the Red Sea miracle?

4:24 – “that all the people of the earth may know...” The sin of Babel resulted in the scattering of people into nations with separate languages all over the world. When God picked Abram, did He give up on the rest of the world?

Israel was chosen to be God’s “city on a hill” to demonstrate his holiness and goodness to a watching world. The Old Testament is the story of Israel’s struggle and idolatry – ultimately pointing to the world’s need for a Savior! What is the consistent message communicated in Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14?

How does Jesus communicate this same commitment and passion for the nations in Matthew 28:18-20? In this context, why is Rahab inclusion in Christ’s lineage so significant?

Joshua 5

5:1 – What was the effect of God’s miraculous power on the nations?

5:2-7 – Why did they need to circumcise the men?

“a second time” does not refer to each man receiving the procedure a second time. “The circumcision was done ‘again...a second time.’ This phrase reflects the information given in vv. 4-5: when the Israelites had left Egypt, that generation of males had been circumcised, but they had died in the wilderness, and the practice had been neglected in the wilderness. Thus, it was necessary to do again, especially before the important celebration of the Passover” (Howard, 148).

Describe the experience and readiness of Israel’s army:

5:6 – Why did the last generation die off?

How did their punishment differ from Moses’ punishment (Deuteronomy 34:4)?

Before the circumcision, the Lord was already actively in their presence, performing miracles and communicating his Word, decrees, and direction. The ark (the symbol of God’s presence) went before them across the Jordan. All of this happened before they were circumcised. What does this teach you about the role, purpose, and significance of circumcision?

“Israel was not the only nation that practiced the rite: Jeremiah mentions Egypt, Edom, Ammon, Moab, and others as nations who practiced it but who were “uncircumcised in their hearts (Jer. 9:25-26)” (Howard, 148).

Circumcision would mark each Israelite as a member of God’s covenant people. Yet, many of the Israelites doubted God and an entire generation was killed off in the desert for their rebellion and doubt. One cannot equate circumcision with faith and salvation in the Old Testament. There have been differing opinions throughout church history regarding the connection between Old Testament circumcision and New Testament Baptism.

Circumcision / Baptism

What is the purpose of baptism in the New Testament, and who should be baptized? (Acts 2:41; 8:36-38)?

What does it symbolize (Colossians 2:11-12 and Galatians 3:27)?

Baptism represents a new life given by Christ through faith. Baptism does not save, but is an outward expression of an inward work of salvation. Circumcision did not necessitate faith. *It was a way to unite an ethnic people, not a people of faith.*

Acts 16:31-33 – Some hold that the baptism of this “*household*” teaches that baptism does equate to circumcision and, therefore, baptism is simply a way of connecting families to God’s New Testament covenant people (assuming that some in this household were baptized without belief). The natural outcome of this position is that babies should be baptized representing their connection to God’s covenant people.

Several difficulties arise:

- There is an assumption taking place that the members of this household did not first believe. It is very possible that they did believe after hearing the miraculous work that God had performed and the message that was preached.

- Acts 16:31 indicates that there was a need for the household to “believe in the Lord Jesus Christ” to be saved. Acts 16:32 teaches that the message was preached to the entire household before a baptism took place. Why would one not suppose that decisions of faith were made?
- Acts 2:41 – It was “those who accepted the message” who were baptized. They did not run home and grab their families or friends who did not accept the message to join in baptism. It seemed to be understood that faith preceded baptism.
- God is no longer working through a particular ethnic group, association is no longer a value – faith is the distinctive marker of God’s people.
- John 1:29-33 – The distinction between John the Baptist’s baptism and the one Jesus would provide was the presence and work of the Holy Spirit.
- Acts 2:38-39 – Those who were baptized would also receive the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not promised to just anyone baptized, even to show association with God’s people. He is a seal, a guarantee of salvation only for those who believe (Ephesians 1:13). Again, this must assume faith before baptism.

There are many other arguments on both sides. BCC does not perform infant baptisms, because we view Scripture as teaching believers’ baptism. Our desire is not to represent a particular denomination, but to rightly divide and apply God’s Word to the best of our ability.

5:8-9 – How would this time have reminded Israel of their own weakness and need for God?

9 – A good way of understanding this verse - “Thus, now that Israel was being so careful to obey God in every way possible culminating with the first observance of circumcision in a generation, God effectively put Israel’s ‘reproach’ stage behind it, rolling it away. Israel was now making a new start, one in which neither Egypt nor any other nation could deride it from its God having seemingly abandoned it” (Howard, 152)

5:10-12 – Exodus 12:1-20 – What event does Passover celebrate? The Feast of Unleavened Bread?

How do we see Israel honoring the past and embracing the future?

How do the rituals and feasts help prepare the Israelites for a coming Messiah?

5:13-15 – How do these verses sound similar to Exodus 3:1-7?

Why would God want to give Joshua a similar experience to Moses?

How do the two experiences differ? How do these differences reflect the different stages of Israel's history?

Moses was called to lead God's people in a mass exodus, redeeming people out of the slavery in Egypt. Joshua was preparing to take a brand-new army to war against many nations. Moses needed a sign of God's presence, Joshua needed a sign of God's military power.

Who was this "**captain of the host**?"

OT Theophanies (an appearance, though an incomplete manifestation, of God)

It would be inappropriate for Joshua to have fallen on his face in worship to an angel (Isaiah 42:8). The presence of an angel does not create a need for one to remove their sandals. The angel of the Lord walks with Israel throughout their history (Gen 16:10; 18:1; 22:12; 22:15; 31:11; 32:30; 48:16; Exodus 3:2; 3:6; 23:20-23; Judges 6:22; 13:21-22...).

It appears that these are instances where God meets with his people in a temporary form. The angel is identified with God, He has the power to give life, all-knowing, He can judge the earth and can forgive sin (all of which only God can do).

John 1:18 – *“No one has ever seen God at any time.”* How can this be possible and the above conclusion also be correct?

“the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him” – It seems that the first half of John 1:18 is referring to the Father, while it is the Son’s role to explain the Father.

As far as we can understand it, the Trinity has always existed as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each is distinctly and completely God while also having determined roles. In the New Testament Jesus is the image of the invisible God (Colossians 1:15; 2:9; Hebrews 1:3); it would be reasonable to suggest that the Son has always represented, revealed, and explained the nature and character of the Father. Theologians and students of Scripture suggest that the appearances of “the angel of the Lord” as the pre-incarnate Christ interacting with His people.

The entire Old Testament is pointing to a coming Messiah. God’s promise to Adam, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob for all nations to be blessed through One who is to come, is the heartbeat that pounds in every book, chapter, and verse of the Old Testament. How does it change your view of Christ to view Him as the one who is directing and interacting with Israel throughout their history?

How does this help you understand his work and participation in your life?

How has this study of Joshua 1-5 continued to build your understanding of God’s character and attributes?

What are some of the major action points you have taken away from this study for yourself? For your involvement in the church?

Bibliography for Joshua

Further Study Suggestions

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