



NONE OF THE
GOOD PROMISES
THE LORD HAD
MADE TO THE
HOUSE OF ISRAEL
FAILED. EVERYTHING
WAS FULFILLED.

J O S H U A 2 1 : 4 5

PROMISE

COMMITTED

DATE

March 7 & 8

WEEK

2 of 5

KEY VERSES

Joshua 21:45 & Joshua 24:15

SETTING THE STAGE

(TEACHERS - Since we are transitioning from the beginning of Joshua last week to the end of the book this week, consider sending out the link to the 8-minute Bible Project video of the book of Joshua as a teaser to this lesson. It will be on the [second.org/teachers](https://www.second.org/teachers) website)

The book of Joshua tells us how God – in His time and in His way – fulfilled the promise of the land in the Abrahamic covenant. Under the leadership of Joshua, God fulfilled His promise to give them land through the conquest of Canaan and the allocation of the land amongst the twelve tribes of Israel.

Last week we looked at Joshua 3 and how they were called to step out in faith and step into the promise of the land and cross the Jordan River. From Chapters 3 to 23, the Israelites engage in battles with the Canaanites who inhabit the land and by God's hand ultimately take possession of the land. In each battle, we see God's faithfulness and Israel's success when they follow His commands. Likewise, we also see the failure of Israel when they do not. Why did God seek to drive out the "ites" of the land? The culture of the Canaanites had become extremely morally corrupt, including child sacrifice. God did not want that influence on His chosen people. These stories are unique to this time in history, unique to the Israelites and limited to those possessing the Promised Land at that time.

LESSON OUTLINE

1. S - Surrender
2. E - Exalt God Only
3. R - Remember
4. V - Veracity - Serve in Truth and Sincerity
5. E - Engage - Hear God's Voice and Obey

THINGS TO KNOW

- The Canaanites consisted of the following people groups, sometimes referred to as the "ites": Hivites, Girgashites, Jebusites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites and more.

PROMISE

COMMITTED

Introduction

God was committed to His promise. In Chapter 21:44-45 we see the key text of the book:

JOSHUA 21:44-45 (HCSB) *The LORD gave them rest on every side according to all He had sworn to their fathers. None of their enemies were able to stand against them, for the LORD handed over all their enemies to them. ⁴⁵ None of the good promises the LORD had made to the house of Israel failed. Everything was fulfilled.*

God delivered their enemies to them. Everything He had promised concerning the land had been fulfilled. So, in Chapter 23-24, we see Joshua's final words to the people, calling them to respond to the fulfillment of God's ancient promise to Abraham.

Joshua calls the Israelites to turn away from Canaanite gods and commit to being faithful to the covenant that they have made with the Living God, the one true God.

Joshua reminds them of God's generosity, reviewing their history of how God brought them into the Promised Land and delivered it into their hands. Joshua calls the Israelites to turn away from Canaanite gods and commit to being faithful to the covenant that they have made with the Living God, the one true God. He explains that if they do so, it will lead to life and blessing. But if they are unfaithful, they will experience the same judgment as the Canaanites. In the end, Joshua calls them to make a choice. Let's look at Joshua 24:1-15 as God, through Joshua, reminds His people of the stories of grace, deliverance, and promise.

JOSHUA 24:1-15 *Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel and for their heads and their judges and their officers; and they presented themselves before God. ² Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'From ancient times your fathers lived beyond the River, namely, Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods. ³ Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River, and led him through all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac. ⁴ To Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau, and to Esau I gave Mount Seir to possess it; but Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt. ⁵ Then I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt by what I did in its midst; and afterward I brought you out. ⁶ I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the sea; and Egypt pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea. ⁷ But when they cried out to the LORD, He put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and brought the sea upon them and covered them; and your own eyes saw what I did in Egypt. And you lived in the wilderness for a long time. ⁸ Then I brought you into the land of the Amorites who lived beyond the Jordan, and they fought with you; and I gave them into your hand, and you took possession of their land when I destroyed them before you. ⁹ Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and fought against Israel, and he sent and summoned Balaam the son of Beor to curse you. ¹⁰ But I was not willing to listen to Balaam. So he had to bless you, and I delivered you from his hand. ¹¹ You crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho; and the citizens of Jericho fought against you, and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Girgashite, the Hivite and the Jebusite. Thus I gave them into your hand. ¹² Then I sent the hornet before you and it drove out the two kings of the Amorites from before you, but not by your sword or your bow. ¹³ I gave you a land on which you had not labored, and cities which you had not built, and you have lived in them; you are eating of vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant.'*



14 “Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. 15 If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

Each day we are confronted with countless choices. Some have minimal consequences, such as whether to press snooze or get up when the alarm goes off, while other decisions can be immediately life-changing. And while some of these moment-by-moment choices may impact our day, other choices may not affect us for years to come. But at the end of the day and the end of our lives, it is important to remember that we are a product of the choices we make. Each decision helps to define who we are, whose we are, and the impact we have on others. As believers, our destiny is not a matter of chance, it is a matter of choice.

In Joshua Chapter 24, in his final words to the Israelites, Joshua calls for them to commit to a choice telling them, “*choose this day whom you will serve.*” It defines who they are, whose they are and their ultimate destiny. Moreover, it is somewhat of a misnomer because it is not initiating the choice as if it is their idea. It is responding to already being God’s chosen people. It is a choice, committing, responding, as ones who have already been claimed. And, contrary to popular opinion, this is not a one-time decision, but rather involves a daily commitment of choosing whom they will serve. It requires “a long obedience in the same direction.” Eugene Petersen says it best in his book by that same name:

We are a product of the choices we make. Each decision helps to define who we are, whose we are, and the impact we have on others.

“The central reality for Christians is the personal, unalterable, persevering commitment God makes to us. Perseverance is not the result of our determination; it is the result of God’s faithfulness. We survive in the way of faith not because we have extraordinary stamina but because God is righteous, because God sticks with us.”¹

The people respond to Joshua’s question with a resounding YES:

JOSHUA 24:16-18 *The people answered and said, “Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; 17 for the LORD our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and who did these great signs in our sight and preserved us through all the way in which we went and among all the peoples through whose midst we passed. 18 The LORD drove out from before us all the peoples, even the Amorites who lived in the land. We also will serve the LORD, for He is our God.”*

What does it mean to choose to “serve the Lord?” Though the details may look different today than they did during Joshua’s time, the principles remain the same. Using SERVE as an acronym, let’s take a look at what Joshua chapter 24 tells us about how to SERVE:

1. S - SURRENDER

Though the people spoke their affirmation with a resounding yes, Joshua knows this cannot be merely a decision of the mind. It must also be a decision of the heart. Because of sin, man is not capable of perfectly serving God in his own power and strength, it requires divine intervention. Look at Joshua’s response:

JOSHUA 24:19 *Then Joshua said to the people, “You will not be able to serve the LORD, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgression or your sins. 20 If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you after He has*

¹ Eugene Petersen, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*, Commemorative Edition, Downers Grove: IVP Books, 2019.

done good to you.”²¹ The people said to Joshua, “No, but we will serve the LORD.”²² Joshua said to the people, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen for yourselves the LORD, to serve Him.” And they said, “We are witnesses.”²³ “Now therefore, put away the foreign gods which are in your midst, and incline your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel.”²⁴ The people said to Joshua, “We will serve the LORD our God and we will obey His voice.”²⁵ So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made for them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.²⁶ **And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God; and he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak that was by the sanctuary of the LORD.**²⁷ Joshua said to all the people, “Behold, this stone shall be for a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the LORD which He spoke to us; thus it shall be for a witness against you, so that you do not deny your God.”²⁸ Then Joshua dismissed the people, each to his inheritance.

Surrender is exchanging our self-dependency for God-dependency.

To serve the Lord requires you to wholly surrender to Him each and every day. It cannot be just part of you that surrenders nor can it be only on Sundays and Wednesdays. Surrender is exchanging our self-dependency for God-dependency. Yielding to God. This is not an act of weakness, rather it is a step of strength because it is surrendering to the authority of someone greater, stronger, wiser and more capable than us. It is surrendering to God. When we do not surrender, we act as our own roadblocks to all that God has for us. Surrendering is choosing to recognize that God’s plan for our lives is better than any version we can dream up on our own. And as Christ-followers, we have the power of the Holy Spirit to help us along the way. Joshua was told to be strong and courageous at the beginning of the book in chapter 1, and that some strength and courage led him to surrender to the Lord.

2. E - EXALT GOD ONLY

Look again at Joshua’s words to the Israelites in verses 20-23:

JOSHUA 24:20-23 *If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you after He has done good to you.”*²¹ The people said to Joshua, “No, but we will serve the LORD.”²² Joshua said to the people, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen for yourselves the LORD, to serve Him.” And they said, “We are witnesses.”²³ **“Now therefore, put away the foreign gods which are in your midst, and incline your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel.”**

Throughout the Bible, we see the greatest temptation for the other nations and God’s chosen people was not to simply reject YAHWEH outright but to add Him to their worship of other gods.

Many of the people the Israelites encountered in Canaan believed in regional or limited gods. For example, they believed one of their gods was in control of the Jordan River and protected them from invaders. This is part of the reason why God’s miraculous act in drying it up for the Israelites to cross had such a huge impact on the Canaanites. (see Joshua 5:1)

Throughout the Bible, we see the greatest temptation for the other nations and God’s chosen people was not to simply reject YAHWEH outright but to add Him to their worship of other gods. To add Him alongside Baal, Asherah and others.

We may not have personal names or statues of little gods in our society today, but we all are equally as guilty of allowing God to be in charge of some parts of our lives but not others, or allowing the important spiritual things to rule us on Sundays but other things to rule us Monday - Saturday. To serve Him we must exalt Him only.

3. R - REMEMBER

JOSHUA 24:16 *The people answered and said, “Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; ¹⁷ for the LORD our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land*

of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and who did these great signs in our sight and preserved us through all the way in which we went and among all the peoples through whose midst we passed.

¹⁸ *The LORD drove out from before us all the peoples, even the Amorites who lived in the land. We also will serve the LORD, for He is our God.”*

In verses 2-13, The Lord recounts, through Joshua, all that the Lord had done for Israel from the time He had first called Abraham and promised to provide the land to his descendants to the present. In verse 13 he poignantly explains that they had land they had not labored for, lived in cities they had not built and had a vineyard and olive grove harvest they had not planted themselves, all by God’s mighty hand. In verses 16-18, the people acknowledge the work of God, remembering all that He has done for them. Then they respond with their commitment, “*We will serve the Lord for He is our God.*”

In serving God, it is essential to remember all that He has done. His Word recounts His grace, deliverance, and promises and actions on our behalf since the beginning of time. Studying His Word embeds these stories in our minds so that we can remember and recount them to others.

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In the very next segment of history after Joshua dies, comes one of the saddest texts in the bible found in the Book of Judges.

JUDGES 2:10 *All that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel.*

¹¹ *Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD and served the Baals...*

Within one generation they had forgotten the commitment that they had made. At any point in time, we are one generation away from not remembering the work which the Lord has done for His people. To serve we need to remember and to recount to our children and grandchildren all that the Lord has done in our lives and the lives of those who have gone before us.

4. V - VERACITY - SERVE IN TRUTH AND SINCERITY

JOSHUA 24:14 *“Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD.*

The Dictionary defines veracity as “habitual observance of truth ...”² The synonyms listed are truthfulness, sincerity, authenticity, integrity, trustworthiness. Serving the Lord in truth and sincerity means serving Him for His glory, not our own. Serving to honor Him, not to honor ourselves or to pat ourselves on the back. Joshua exemplified this type of service throughout his lifetime. He was telling them how to live in the presence of God, serving Him only. Fear of the Lord is a humble reverence. We are told in Proverbs that fear of the Lord is the beginning of all wisdom. (*Proverbs 9:10*)

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This principle, like the others, is as true for us today as it was for the Israelites. God calls us to serve Him in sincerity and in truth, standing upon His Word, boldly declaring our faith as His servant, walking in His ways.

² Dictionary.com/veracity

5. E - ENGAGE - HEAR GOD'S VOICE AND OBEY

JOSHUA 24:23 "Now therefore, put away the foreign gods which are in your midst, and incline your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel." ²⁴ The people said to Joshua, "We will serve the LORD our God and we will obey His voice."

It is easy for God's voice to get muffled. Our ears tune in to secular noise so easily that we tune God out subconsciously. It takes intentional engagement to hear and obey. As Chuck Swindoll says, "thinking right always precedes acting right." ³ Serving requires engaging the heart and the mind to hear from the Lord, then carrying out His commands.

HOW HIS PLAN SHAPES OUR PURPOSE

God gave the land He had promised to the nation of Israel. Joshua did his best to lead and guide them in taking possession of the land. Yet, the people allowed some inhabitants to remain despite the commands of the Lord. Ultimately, the Canaanite people groups became a damaging influence on Israel.

In Joshua's lifetime, the Israelites honored the commitment they made at Shechem that day to serve the Lord but then fell away from the Lord after his death. The good news for us is that because of the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. (*Romans 8:37*)

Serving the Lord does not just happen by accident; it only happens with intentionality. You can choose how to live your life. You can choose what to make your priority. You can choose when to make a change. It always comes down to choice. And once you make that choice you have to decide if you are committed to following through. Joshua was committed to his choice of serving the Lord. Joshua was committed to his choice of leading the people of God. Joshua was committed to his choice of making a difference in the lives of others.

We can choose to commit to who we will serve. We can commit to stand with Joshua and say, *As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.* Remember, it is a daily choice.

³ Chuck Swindoll, *Improving Your Serve*, Nashville: Word Publishing, 1981.