

APRIL-JUNE 1995

# CQ

COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY

## JOSHUA



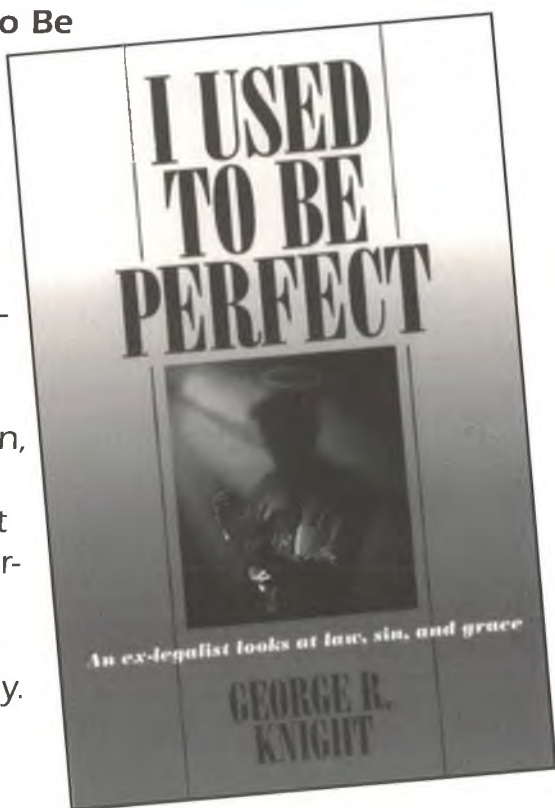
GUERRILLAS AND SPIES

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# JOSHUA

## GUERRILLAS AND SPIES

APRIL - JUNE 1995

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## This Quarter's Artist



David B. Sherwin was a missionary kid who grew up most of his life overseas in Pakistan without the influence of television. "I built a lot of my own toys," he says, "and when I was 12, I had a darkroom and learned how to print pictures. Creativity was something I enjoyed and developed."

He now lives in Michigan with his wife and two children, owns a commercial studio, and works for many major companies, including Sears, Whirlpool, Upjohn, Zenith, and most of the major Christian publishing companies in the United States.



# Getting the Most Out of *CQ*

## Facts You Should Know

*CQ* is based on the conviction that the Word of God offers transforming power and that group study is one important way to tap into that power. *CQ*'s purpose is to provide Seventh-day Adventist young adults with a resource for devotional study on mutual topics, which can then be discussed each week in Sabbath School. Many who use the adult quarterly find that because *CQ* deals with the same topics as the adult quarterly it enriches lesson study and discussion as a supplemental aid.

Adventist young-adult groups work together in producing this quarterly. More than 200 individuals contribute to *CQ* each year. The wide variety—and occasional repetition—of the content reflects the great diversity of its contributors around the world as they respond creatively and individually to the subject.

Worldwide circulation of *CQ* is about 59,000.

## Pointers for Study

1. Through prayer, open your mind to the Holy Spirit's guidance as you study.

2. The Bible passage on which each week's lesson is based appears in bold type in the "Logos" pages (Monday's portion of the lesson). Read this entire passage in conjunction with the quarterly introduction to give yourself an overview of the lesson.

3. The Bible passage for the week is divided into sections on the "Logos" pages (Monday's portion of the lesson). When studying this section, carefully reread Bible passages indicated in bold headings before reading the comments beneath the heading.

4. Read remaining sections for the week with the perspective you have gained from your own study of the biblical passage.

5. Keep in mind the purposes of each section of the quarterly:

"**Introduction**" (Sunday) is designed to stimulate your interest and focus your thinking on the week's theme.

"**Logos**" (Monday), as described above, is a guide for direct study of the Bible passage for the week.

"**Testimony**" (Tuesday) presents Ellen White's perspective on the lesson theme.

"**Evidence**" (Wednesday) approaches issues raised by the lesson from a historical, scientific, philosophical, or theological perspective.

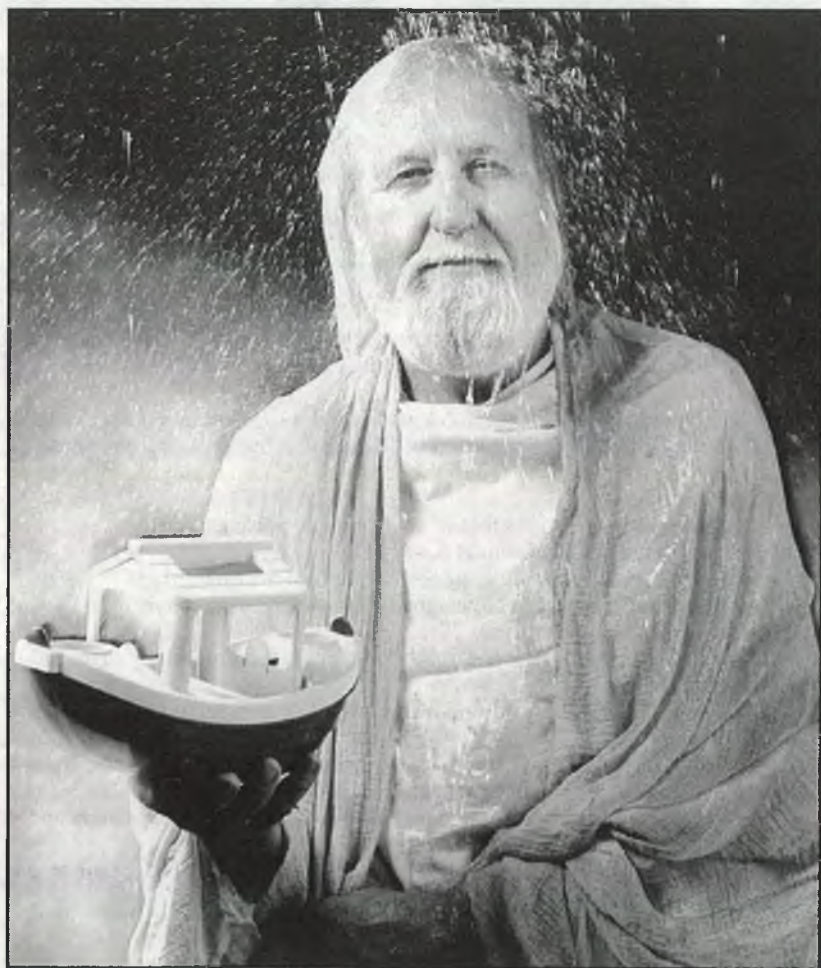
"**How-To**" (Thursday) discusses what the abstractions in the lesson mean for day-to-day living.

"**Opinion**" (Friday), a personal viewpoint on the lesson, is meant to encourage further thought and discussion.

## *CQ* and the Church

*CQ* is the General Conference-approved quarterly for the collegiate/young-adult age group. It upholds the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. *However, its contents should not be regarded as official pronouncements of the church.*

# THE MAN OF THE HOUR



**“And the Lord said to Moses: ‘Take Joshua the son of Nun with you, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him’ ” (Num. 27:18, NKJV).**



# The Making of a Great Leader

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: 1 Kings 18:36**

Heavy rain pounded on the outside of the ark. Noah looked at his wife and children as he listened to the cries of those on the outside of the huge vessel. "Praise the Lord for his mercy in sparing us. We have followed Him, and He has not forsaken us," he whispered.

Many years later, a battle raged on the plains of Gath, as David warred with the Philistines. Suddenly, a giant of a man with six fingers on each hand appeared. Drawing back his bow, David's brother Jonathan, son of Shimeah, slew the giant to spare the lives of himself and the others who fought with him. David sighed from the exhaustion of battle and slowly began to sing a song. The words became clear as they tumbled from his mouth. "The Lord has rewarded me according to my righteousness, according to my cleanness in his sight" (2 Sam. 22:25, NIV).

Years later, a man named Elijah watched with great confidence as the followers of King Ahab once again soaked the altar where he had placed the sacrifice. With fervor the great prophet prayed, "O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let

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## **An explosion of fire fell from heaven and consumed the altar.**

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it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command" (1 Kings 18:36). As the last word of the prayer left Elijah's lips, an explosion of fire fell from heaven and consumed the altar.

What did these three men have in common? Why was the Lord so generous in bestowing His blessings on them? What qualities do they share with Joshua, who was selected by God to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land?

First, we need to acknowledge that all three were great leaders. Second, we find that each accomplished great things throughout his leadership. Most important, Noah, David, and Elijah shared a common faith in God; they were willing to let Him lead them. These three men credited God for their victories.

When Joshua returned from exploring Canaan, he warned the Israelite community of the danger of rebelling against the Lord. Joshua says, "If the Lord is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land" (Num. 14:8). The Lord wanted the Israelites to look to Him for guidance in all that they undertook. The Lord promised the Israelites the land of Canaan—a "land flowing with milk and honey." Today, the Lord encourages us to follow our church leaders so that we, too, can become great leaders like Joshua. Through God's guidance we, like Joshua, can help lead people to Jesus so they will be able to join us when we enter the Promised Land.

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*By Aimee Perrino, a senior elementary education and children's literature major at Castleton State College, Castleton, Vermont.*

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## The Lord Is With Us

### LOGOS

**Exod. 17:8-14; Num. 13:1-14:38; 27:12-23**

*"So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword" (Exod. 17:13, NKJV).*

Hoshea, or Oshea (meaning "salvation"), of the tribe of Ephraim (Num. 13:8, 16) was chosen by Moses as military commander during the wilderness wanderings. About this time Moses changed the name of his faithful leader to Joshua. (*Joshua* means "Jehovah is salvation" or "Jehovah helps.") His new name not only reflected his character but also his commission. Oftentimes names bespoke the person's character. He was to be God's man for this special time in history. He was to lead Israel not only in military victories in Canaan but also to a spiritual reliance on God. Two men with holy hands achieved victory over the Amalekites: trustworthy Joshua and his chosen men using their hands in battle to defend God's cause and Moses on the hill with holy hands uplifted to God (Exod. 17:8-14).

*How can you use your hands in service to God? Can you think of ways that you, like Aaron and Hur, can uphold the hands of godly leaders?*

### Minority Report

*"Only do not rebel against the Lord, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the Lord is with us. Do not fear them" (Num. 14:9).*

The majority report had been given, expressing doubts and fears. The Israelites even decided to choose another leader and go back to Egypt. In profound grief Caleb and Joshua tore off their clothes (verses 1-6). Then, pleadingly, they gave a report of confidence and certainty in God's power: "The Lord is with us. Do not fear them" (verse 9).

The minority report of the spying expedition into Canaan showed faith and trust in God. Caleb and Joshua looked beyond what seemed impossible to see humanly speaking and saw what was possible with God. God had promised them victory. Why not take God at His word and proceed into the land He would give them?

Joshua and Caleb spoke positively. It was evident that they had a living relationship with God through faith, practice, and experience. The congregation was ready to stone them for being right with God (verse 10). For 40 years the people had murmured and complained. They kept looking back at Egypt instead of looking forward to victory in the power of God. Except for Moses and Aaron, Joshua and Caleb stood almost alone. Yet they still held confidence in God and never doubted that they could do anything when God had promised to be with them.

*Describe a time when you found yourself upholding God's cause among a group of doubters. How did you feel when people turned down God's plan or His church?*

### A Proven Leader

*"And the Lord said to Moses: 'Take Joshua the son of Nun with you, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him'" (verse 18).* Only someone under



the control of the Holy Spirit could fit a man for the great responsibility that God had planned in leading Israel into Canaan. The richness of Joshua's experience qualified him to have the hands of consecration and ordination placed upon him. This was the mantle of Moses placed upon him. A proven man of God would now lead His people.

*Like Joshua, have you recognized God's call to you? Have you dedicated your life in service for Him? What have you done this week to lead people to the Promised Land?*

### **Joshua, a Type of Christ**

*"For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day" (Heb. 4:8).*

In the King James Version, the name *Jesus* is used for *Joshua* here. "The English name *Jesus* is a transliteration of the Greek, which in turn is a transliteration of the Hebrew equivalent of *Joshua*."\*

Joshua led the Israelites in the conquest of Canaan, but they were unwilling to enter into spiritual "rest."

Even in name, Joshua is a type of Christ. Joshua came from the tribe of Ephraim. Ephraim was Joseph's youngest son, who had received the first-

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## **The richness of Joshua's experience qualified him to have the hands of ordination placed upon him.**

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born's blessing from Jacob and was treated equally among the other tribes (Gen. 48:5-20).

Joshua had complete dependence upon God. He trusted and obeyed Him and led God's people into the Promised Land. He also led them to serve the Lord (Josh. 24:31). He trained others and set an example in his own life. Though maligned and ridiculed, he stood firm for truth.

Jesus depended completely upon His Father while sojourning in the earth. He sought to lead the faithful in trust and obedience. He also sought by the example of His own life to show the way that they should go. In so doing they would then be ready when He should come again to take them to the Promised Land (John 3:16; 14:1-3). Though suffering persecution and death, He was victorious, as will be all who follow Him.

Let us, too, lay the foundation that Joshua did of faith, trust, obedience, and love. Then it may be said of us, "The Lord is with us."

Do you really believe the Lord is with you? Find someone this week with whom you can share this conviction. When problems or perplexities assail you, put this conviction to the test. It will help you to strengthen your conviction that truly "the Lord is with us."

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\* *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 421.

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*By R. Lenbert Cheney, a retired minister in Rutland, Vermont.*

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# Master Guide to Victory

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text:** Isa. 42:16

Ours is a society of how-to guides: TV guides, teachers' guides, sports guides, nutritional guides, fashion guides, etc. In the midst of all these guidebooks, many turn to false guidance in the form of New Age philosophies, humanism, and the occult in the search for spiritual guidance. Instead of victory, these human-inspired worship systems lead the unaware into destruction. "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death" (Prov. 14:12, RSV). "If men will walk in the path that God has marked out for them, they will have a counselor whose wisdom is far above any human wisdom. Joshua was a wise general because God was his guide. The first sword that Joshua used was the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God." (Read Joshua 1:1, 5, 7.)

"Do you think that all these charges would have been given to Joshua if there had been no danger of his being brought under misleading influences? It was because the strongest influences were to be brought to bear against his principles of

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**"Man is not to make man his guide, lest he be led astray."**

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righteousness that the Lord in mercy charged him not to turn to the right hand or to the left. He was to follow a course of strictest integrity. [Joshua 1:8, 9 quoted.] If there had been no peril before Joshua, God would not over and over again have charged him to be of good courage. But amid all his cares, Joshua had his God to guide him.

"There is no greater deception than for man to suppose that in any difficulty he can find a better guide than God, a wiser counselor in any emergency, a stronger defense under any circumstance. . . .

"The Lord has a great work to be done in our world. To every man He has given *His* work for man to do. But man is not to make man his guide, lest he be led astray; this is always unsafe. While Bible religion embodies the principles of activity in service, at the same time there is the necessity of asking for wisdom daily from the Source of all wisdom. What was Joshua's victory? Thou shalt meditate upon the Word of God day and night. The word of the Lord came to Joshua just before he passed over Jordan [Joshua 1:7, 8 quoted]. This was the secret of Joshua's victory. He made God his guide."\*

## REACT

1. In what ways do I allow God to guide me?
2. What is my part in God's great work to be done in our world?

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\* *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7-A, Ellen G. White Comments, p. 993.

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*By Janet B. Hurd, a music and art teacher for the Vermont Public School system and Bible instructor for the Rutland (Vermont) SDA Church.*

# A Leader Is Chosen

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Josh. 1:5**

As a result of disobedience, Moses was prohibited by God to go into the Promised Land (Num. 20:1-12.) With Aaron dead and Moses banned from the Promised Land, the Israelites were without an earthly leader. Moses was instructed to go up Mount Abarim to look over and see the land that the Lord had promised them (27:12-14). Moses pleaded with the Lord to allow him to lead his people over. God denied him again, so Moses pleaded with God once more. If he could not lead the people, then would God appoint a new leader? "And the Lord said unto Moses, take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him; and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight" (verses 18, 19).

Joshua had proven himself a servant of God and a leader of people for many

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## With Aaron dead and Moses banned from the Promised Land, the Israelites were without an earthly leader.

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years. In Numbers 13 and 14, Joshua and 11 other scouts were chosen, one from each tribe, to search out the land. All 12 were convinced of the wondrous benefits that Canaan had to offer. Ten of the 12 were also convinced that these great benefits were unobtainable because of the powerful peoples inhabiting the land. When they gave their report to the people of Israel, the people complained against God. Why had He brought them out through this desert only to be denied what they had come for? Caleb and Joshua had the faith that with God on their side there would be no problem obtaining the land that they needed.

Joshua had a lot of faith in God and had been faithfully serving Him whenever called. He had assisted Moses on many occasions in leading the children of Israel. In Exodus 17 Joshua leads the men into battle against Amalek. They were undermanned and had less armor than their opponents. But when God instructed Moses to sit on the hill overlooking the battle and hold up his arms—thus blessing the warriors—Joshua believed and, without question, led the men right into battle.

This story, among others, demonstrates Joshua's great faith in God. Joshua's life teaches us that through trust and faith in God, and with Him on our side, we can do anything.

## REACT

1. What can you do to increase your faith in God and to be a Joshua?
2. What benefit could a few "Joshuas" have in your church?
3. What qualities do I share with Joshua?
4. What steps can I take to become a modern "Joshua"?

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*By David Tate, a nursing student at the University of Vermont at Burlington.*

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# Called by God

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: Prov. 3:5, 6**

Have you ever wondered what makes a good leader? A study of the life of Joshua offers some qualities of good leadership.

**1. He was confident.** Joshua showed self-confidence when he said, “We will conquer them easily. The Lord is with us and has defeated the gods who protected them; so don’t be afraid” (Num. 14:9, TEV). His self-confidence came not from what he thought he could do but from what he knew God could do.

**2. He was positive.** A good leader needs to be positive in his dealings with those under him. He needs to keep their eyes on the ultimate goal, whatever that may be. With Joshua, it was convincing the children of Israel that they could take the Promised Land—that God would give it to them (verse 8).

**3. He had a living faith in the Lord.** God is the supreme Leader. Proverbs 3:5,

## We do not have Moses here to teach us, but we do have the better Teacher.

6 says that if we truly trust in the Lord and acknowledge Him, He will lead us.

**4. He was filled with the Holy Spirit.** God told Moses to “take Joshua the son of Nun with you, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him” (Num. 27:18, NKJV). “By his quiet, unpretending fidelity, his steadfastness when others wavered, his firmness to maintain the truth in the midst of danger, [Joshua] had given evidence of his fitness to succeed Moses, even before he was called to the position by the voice of God.” Certainly, the Holy Spirit can dwell in a life such as that.

Joshua was the leader chosen by God to take the Israelites into the Promised Land. We are God’s chosen to lead the people today into the heavenly Promised Land. Even though we are not all generals in modern Israel, we all have been called by God to lead others to Christ.

God needs Joshuas today. How can we develop these characteristics? Joshua’s training was under the able leadership of Moses, God’s chosen leader for the Israelites. We do not have Moses here to teach us, but we do have the better Teacher. Through study of His Word, studying the lives of the great men and women of the Bible, communion with Him, and willingness to be touched by Him, we can become exactly the type of spiritual leader He needs today.

## REACT

1. How should we evaluate leadership?
2. Name some modern Joshuas of today. Explain your choice.

\* *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 481, 482.



# Choose Wisely

## OPINION

**Key Text: Num. 14:36-38**

“We can’t attack those people; they are stronger than we are” (Num. 13:31, NIV). And the 10 spies spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, “The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. . . . We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them” (verses 32, 33).

Only the voices of Joshua and Caleb held hope: “The land we passed through and explored is exceedingly good. If the Lord is pleased with us, he will lead us into that land, a land flowing with milk and honey, and will give it to us. Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, but the Lord is with us. Do not be afraid of them” (14:7-9).

But, like poison, the complaints of the other 10 infected the community. As a

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## Though they are dead, the spirit of those 10 men lives on in our churches today.

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result, Joshua and Caleb, who trusted God and His Word, were spared. The rest of the community were sentenced to die without ever seeing the Promised Land.

Though they are dead, the spirit of those 10 men lives on in our churches today. You’ve heard it; you’ve seen its effects with your own eyes. It infiltrates the ranks, causing the same discouragement and doubt, destroying trust in God and treating Him with contempt.

You can hear it. Listen:

“It’s impossible to live by all the church standards in today’s world. There’s too much pressure to fit in.”

“The church is full of hypocrites. They say one thing and do another.”

“Witness? Are you kidding? What would people think of me? I’m sure someone else will spread the good news.”

The Promised Land stretches out before us. Jesus stands in the gate, saying, “Trust me and I will lead you into this land. I’ll spend eternity with you if you will only trust Me.” Here on the threshold of the Promised Land, will you be a Joshua, trusting in God to deliver what He has promised? Or will you poke the embers of a fire that should be long dead and keep alive the spirit of men who never lived to see the Promised Land?

## REACT

1. In what ways will your decision to be like Joshua affect your church?
2. If Joshua were alive today, how would he respond to the murmurers in the church?

---

*By Celeste perrino Walker, a freelance writer from Rutland, Vermont.*

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# THE QUEST FOR REST



**“For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God” (Heb. 4:8, 9, NIV).**

# Spiritual Apnea

## INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Josh. 4:8, 9

For most people, sleep is a restful state of unconsciousness. However, 1 to 4 percent of the population put themselves at risk every time they go to sleep. These individuals experience sleep apnea.

Sleep apnea sufferers stop breathing during sleep. Obstructive sleep apnea is the most common type. In this condition, upper airway obstruction causes an abrupt choking effect. This leads to a brief startled awakening as the individual gasps for air. A cycle of sleep, obstruction, and awakening occurs numerous times throughout the night.

Individuals prone to develop sleep apnea tend to be middle-aged, obese males. Two prominent features of these males are their unusually loud snoring and excessive daytime sleepiness. They often fall asleep at meetings, meals, and even while driving. Long-term effects can include hypertension, alteration of mental capacities, and, in severe cases, heart failure. Fortunately, treatment is often effective,

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## Sleep apnea sufferers stop breathing during sleep.

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ranging from reduction of weight and changes in sleeping position to surgery.

Surprisingly, victims of sleep apnea are usually unaware of the frequent night awakenings. They retire each evening intending to get a “good night’s sleep,” yet feel tired in the morning and lethargic throughout the day. Although sleep is achieved, quality rest is lacking.

A similar condition may exist in our spiritual lives. After getting in our “eight hours” of prayer, daily devotions, and church attendance, we do not feel the spiritual rest that God intends. Perhaps we need to examine the quality of our rest. For example, time spent in meditation is often interrupted by thoughts of our busy lives—appointments, deadlines, and exams. We don’t use the time to focus on God’s love and His purpose for our lives.

The concept of quality rest is alluded to in Hebrews 4:8, 9. Under Joshua’s leadership, God sought to give the children of Israel rest in Canaan after years of wandering in the wilderness. Today, Christians need Christ’s leading to find spiritual rest. This includes Sabbath rest as well as quality time spent meditating on Christ. It also extends to the way we live. “Abiding in Christ is choosing only the disposition of Christ, so that His interests are identified with yours. Abide in Him, to be and to do only what He wills. . . . Rest is in Christ, it cannot be something apart from Him.”\*

Unlike that of sleep apnea sufferers, this rest will leave us refreshed.

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\* *Selected Messages*, p. 110.



## Twenty-four Hours on a Bike

### LOGOS

**Num. 13:16; Josh. 1:2-5; 3:7; Deut. 18:15-19; 34:10-12; Heb. 3, 4.**

*"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28, RSV).*

I can still vividly remember the weekend during high school at Canadian Union College when six of us students participated in a 24-hour bikeathon. We secured our bike frames to stationary rollers and then took turns, over the course of the next 24 hours, cycling 20-mile sprints to raise funds for a worthwhile venture.

The two most vivid recollections I have of that experience are, first, the various parts of my body that remained sore for days afterward, and, second, my all-consuming desire for rest after about 18 hours of noise and activity.

As I write these words, there is a contest at the local shopping mall, where 20 people are competing to win a new automobile. The one who keeps his or her hands on the car the longest wins the car. After 72 hours, only four contestants remain. In interviews with the press, the sleepy-eyed contestants complain of fatigue, and their unanimous plea is for rest. The need and desire for rest has taken 16 of the original 20 people out of the contest. The need for rest from the cares and stresses of life is universal, and there is a constant search for new ways to attain more, and better, quality rest.

According to God's original plan, the Israelites' journey from Egypt through the wilderness to Canaan was to be a story of a triumphant march to a Promised Land and to a "spiritual rest," with all of the accompanying benefits and privileges.

Sadly, God's original plan and invitation for His chosen people was not accepted, and God forbade Moses and the generation of Israelites that had left Egypt from entering Canaan. He spoke of His hurt and disappointment when He said, "They shall never enter my rest" (Heb. 3:11).

*"The Lord said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, 'Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land which I am giving to them'" (Josh. 1:1, 2).*

Enter Joshua. While the Israelites did not enter into God's spiritual rest because of their unbelief, Joshua was nonetheless allowed to lead them into Canaan. The spiritual rest promised by God remained for all who would believe, for when God sets His sights on an objective, He ultimately achieves it (Heb. 4:6).

God's ongoing promise of a spiritual rest transcends all generations. The promise is based on His desire to spend eternity with those whom He has created and on His declaration on the sixth day of creation that His work was finished (verse 3). God's desire to spend eternity with those whom He has created meant that no matter what the children of Israel did to turn against God, the fact remained that someone would "enter that rest" (4:6).

*"Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, that no one fall by the same sort of disobedience" (Heb. 4:11).*

God's spiritual rest is available to those who "with confidence draw near to the throne of grace" (verse 16), where Christ ministers (3:1). Those who come will find One who can sympathize with their weaknesses (4:14, 15) and One who will help in time of need (verse 16).

While God's promise of spiritual rest is passed on to each generation, a foretaste of that rest is provided to us each week on the Sabbath. The concept of a rest each week is twofold, namely, the cessation of our labors, and the state of inactivity. Both aspects were evidenced in God's rest on the first Sabbath, when He ceased creating and then remained inactive as far as creating was concerned.

Our observance of the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath testifies to our faith in God as Creator of all things, and it is a visible expression of our faith.

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## **The one who keeps his or her hands on the car the longest wins the car.**

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A little taste of the ultimate spiritual rest is promised for whoever enters into this partnership with God (3:14).

Our participation in the Sabbath rest also testifies to our desire to live in harmony with God's eternal purpose for His creation and for us as individuals. As with God's original purpose for His creation, His invitation to seek rest with Him remains unchanged. He therefore established His day of rest to be a memorial of both His creation and our faith in His power to transform lives, so that each of us can enter with Him into eternal rest.

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*By Wayne Malcolm Schafer, a lawyer in Edmonton, Alberta.*

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# The Truth Will Bring You Rest

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: John 8:32**

In Joshua's time the quest of the children of Israel for spiritual peace remained largely unfulfilled. Nonetheless, we often refer to Joshua as a type of Christ because his mission paralleled Christ's. God intended to reveal His will through the leadership of Joshua. Ellen White, like Joshua, was used by God to reveal God's character more fully. In this sense she, too, was a type of Christ. This concept is better understood when one considers Christ's purpose on earth.

"Jesus came to teach men of the Father, to correctly represent Him before the fallen children of earth. Angels could not fully portray the character of God, but Christ, who was a living impersonation of God, could not fail to accomplish the work. The only way in which He could set men right and keep men right was to make Himself visible and familiar to their eyes . . . Christ exalted the character of God, attributing to Him the praise, and giving to Him the credit, of the whole purpose of His mission on earth, to set men right and keep men right through the revelation of God. . . . When the object of His mission was obtained, the revelation

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## Ellen White was used by God to reveal His character more fully.

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of God to the world, the Son of God announced that His work was accomplished, and that the character of the Father was made manifest to men."<sup>1</sup>

Jesus is often pictured as in some way placating the Father, as if in some way the Father's love for us was less than the Son's. Descriptions of God's terrible wrath have frequently been used to bring sinners to repentance. Reasoning is cast aside, often in the guise of faith, when we picture a God who threatens us with torture and death unless we submit to His will. There can be no eternal rest until the universe understands the character of God as revealed on the cross.

Ellen White, whose life was characterized by prayerful meditation, was given insight into the truth about God's love for us. "We are not to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin. The sinner brings the punishment upon himself."<sup>2</sup>

"Christ is ready to set us free from sin, but He does not force our will; and if by persistent transgression the will is wholly bent on evil, and we do not desire to be set free, if we will not accept His grace, what more can He do? We have destroyed ourselves by our determined rejection of His love."<sup>3</sup>

## REACT

Explain why you agree or disagree that Ellen White is a type of Christ.

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1. *Signs of the Times*, January 20, 1890.

2. *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 235.

3. *Steps to Christ*, p. 34.

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*By Tom Ninninger, a dental student at the University of Alberta at Edmonton.*

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# Lessons in Leadership

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Heb. 4:8**

Written during the Israelites' Babylon exile, the stories of Israel's rapid mastery over Canaan may have served to restore their hopes of returning Israel to its former glory. But Joshua, unlike Christ, was an imperfect human leader, whose function ended with the settlement of the Promised Land. This difference provides some insight into past and present human leadership of God's people.

Though much has changed since Joshua's time, dynamics of human leadership of God's people seem to have remained basically the same. For example, as followers, we have often wandered from God's love and protection, either to be rescued or lost. As human leaders of God's people, we have sometimes failed our followers because of our imperfections and fallibility.

Hebrews 4:8 contrasts Joshua's leadership with Christ's. It reveals that:

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### **If we could see ourselves from such a distance, would we fare any better?**

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(1) what Joshua accomplished was a foreshadow of what God intended to do, and (2) Joshua was unable to accomplish what God had intended. Both interpretations have significance.

In Greek, the name *Joshua* is equivalent to the name *Jesus*. Joshua, as Christ's foreshadow, can be seen through his accomplishments, which ended the first six books of the Bible with the conquering of the Promised Land. Joshua led his people in beginning a new and fruitful existence. Christ's role, like Joshua's role before Him, is to lead us into our "Promised Land"—God's rest.

Yet Joshua's leadership of the children of Israel did not bring them to God's rest. This failure was less the result of Joshua's personal shortcomings than of the inability of the children of Israel to interact properly with their contemporaries. For the generation that wandered in the desert, rest was seen in social, economic, and political terms. Though God intended this for His people, He also intended their entry into spiritual rest.

Today, we should not feel immune to such lack of insight. Our church has many traditions that do nothing to lead us to God's rest. We are often puzzled by the actions of the Israelites, but if we could see ourselves from such a distance, would we fare any better?

How will the church's practice of following certain social practices of the 1800s be viewed by coming generations in the church? Does our rigid adherence to a form of worship specified by time, gender roles, dress, and type of music facilitate our quest for spiritual rest? How might our smug attitude regarding the correctness of our doctrines be seen? We must realize that, like Joshua, we have the responsibility to lead people to God's rest. Under Joshua's leadership, God's presence spread throughout Canaan. Shouldn't we act with equal zeal and determination?

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*By David Kim, a medical student at the University of Alberta at Edmonton.*

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# How to Achieve True Rest

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: Heb. 4:1**

Think of the time when your Christian experience was at its pinnacle—a time when you were really at peace and energized by your relationship with God. Three aspects of such an experience hold the key to the spiritual rest promised in Hebrews 4:1.

First, you had no expectations of God but simply accepted His leading in your life. Specific expectations are often followed by demands that interfere with the faith and trust that are essential in our walk with God.

Second, your mind was open to God's still small voice. There was a harmony with Christ and His plan for your life. A busy schedule without time put aside for communication with our heavenly Father can tune out the still small voice, just as a personal friendship can be adversely affected when we fail to keep in touch and interact regularly with that person. We must realize that God's voice can be heard only with the keenly trained listening ear. Such a sixth sense must be utilized

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## **As with so many of God's gifts, we seem to have a hard time accepting spiritual rest.**

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daily so we can learn to recognize God's leading in our lives. Daily communication can give us a sense of God's plan.

Third, we must daily exercise our faith in God as the Director of our lives and the Friend who is always there for us. Faith can move mountains, and each one of us has mountains in our lives that need moving.

Spiritual rest is a gift from God and is ours for the asking. However, as with so many of God's gifts, we seem to have a hard time accepting it. Instead of accepting, by faith, God's leading in our lives, we make demands, set deadlines, and attempt to negotiate with our heavenly Father. The acceptance of the gift of spiritual rest takes second place to our own agenda.

Likewise, our hectic daily schedules block out the still small voice that offers rest and assurance. Without a daily communion with God, the still small voice becomes very difficult to hear, and we again lose out on the assurance of rest.

Finally, in this age of self-reliance and our commitment to self-awareness, self-improvement, and self-attainment, the concept of faith is sometimes hard to relate to. Yet it is by faith that we surrender to God's leading and to His promise of providing us with the rest that is so satisfying.

## **REACT**

1. Why do we have so difficult a time accepting God's spiritual rest?
  2. What is keeping you from accepting it?
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*By Peter John Rawlek and Barbara Elizabeth Chipeur. Peter Rawlek is a fourth-year medical student and Barbara Chipeur, a fourth-year dental student at the University of Alberta at Edmonton.*

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# The Definition of Insanity

## OPINION

**Key Text: Matt. 6:33**

Sometimes it's difficult to understand why the Israelites' wilderness experience is given to us. The idea that this primitive nation wandering about has anything to teach us is hard to grasp. But are we, as we "run to and fro," any different from those wandering the desert?

Rest is one of humanity's basic needs, which is one reason the Bible emphasizes the Sabbath. Like our pastors and teachers today, Joshua was only an advocate pointing to Christ. The Israelites could not look beyond Joshua to the invisible Christ. Today, while we support church leadership, we must seek to make Christ the ultimate authority in our lives.

Jesus said that those who drink of the water He offered would never thirst. The same is true of His everlasting rest, in contrast to the physical rest of a night's sleep or the observance of Sabbath. How can the Sabbath help us achieve divine rest? The spiritual rest God was anxious to give the Israelites should not be left as

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### **This rest is more than a sunset-to-sunset weekly ritual.**

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an unopened gift. This rest is more than a sunset-to-sunset weekly ritual—it is a lifestyle and an attitude that too few have discovered.

The Israelites allowed their problems to hinder their relationship with God. Today, we too often let our problems interfere in the same way. The battle is ongoing to keep the bills paid while providing a comfortable lifestyle for ourselves and our families. Time with God is usually allocated only after we have taken care of everything else (which never occurs).

We marvel at how blind the Israelites were and truly sympathize with God when He called them a "stiff-necked people." Yet we remain unguarded when we race for the video store at five minutes after sunset. Someone said that the definition of insanity is to keep doing the same things over and over and expect different results. How often do we ignore God and yet expect a spiritual blessing?

Can we have faith that our finances or our grades will not suffer because we spend time with our Saviour? Devotional time, like classes or business luncheons, must be scheduled. It won't just happen. It takes faith to accept Jesus' promise, "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matt. 6:33, NIV). This does not mean that earning money or enjoying material things is wrong; it just means that the rest spoken of in Hebrews 4:8 and 9 will not be experienced by those who put these things ahead of God. Now is the time to establish the motto, "As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15).

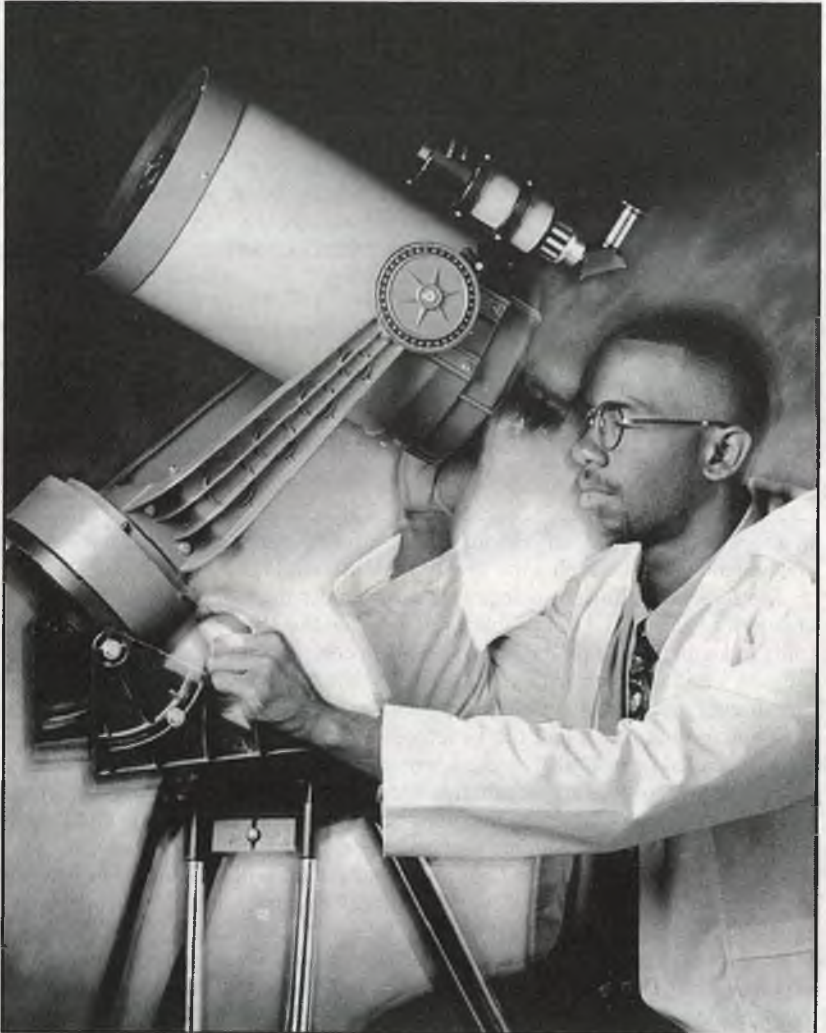
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*By Denise Bennett, a musician and businesswoman in Edmonton, Alberta.*

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# BATTLE STRATEGY



**“Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful” (Josh. 1:8, NIV).**

# A Bionic Eye

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Deut. 31:1-8**

It is amazing! Today, it's possible for people to see at a distance of many kilometers, as if they possessed the vision of a powerful telescope. It's not science fiction or a thing of the imagination.

Recently a team of investigators developed an amazing artificial eye. Their main goal was to build a chain of silicon capable of processing one billion bits of visual information per second, just like the human retina.

This powerful precision instrument is in reality a computer with advanced process systems capable of recognizing colors and figures. This bionic eye is a door of hope for the visually handicapped.

Although it's true that science is achieving incredible accomplishments in the field of physical optics, very often there are no accomplishments in the field of spiritual optics. When small walls are raised that limit the Christian's vision and

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## **Very often there are no accomplishments in the field of spiritual optics.**

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this is added to the discouragement and lack of confidence in God, we are faced with a classic disease in the Christian community: spiritual blindness.

For this reason we, just like Moses, need to understand that the goal of those who have accepted Jesus goes beyond their personal leadership. It would have been an unfortunate mistake to leave no successor to the leader after his death. The true leader is not thinking of taking his leadership with him when he dies.

We often feel that the efforts to finish the work, reach the finish line, and accomplish our goals are a failure. We must ask God to allow us to look beyond the difficulties. Our Lord can and is willing to give us a spiritual bionic eye whose system of operation is faith in the God of the impossible and whose operator is God Himself.

Just as for Joshua and Moses, God has a plan for every individual, and He looks beyond what our limited eyes can see. He multiplies our vision. In God and with God, human beings can reach their maximum potential. Therefore, if the ideal that God has for His children is "higher than the highest human thought can reach," why can we not put our eyes in God's point of focus? Why not trust in the One who has better eyesight than we do? Why wait for crisis to come to ask God for better plans for our lives?

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\* *Messages to Young People*, p. 40.

# Profiles of Great Leadership

## LOGOS

**Josh. 1:6-18; Deut. 31:1-8**

We live in a world starving for leadership. There are many managers but few leaders. Having power to dictate and govern is not necessarily synonymous with having the abilities of a qualified leader.

Moses and Joshua embody the ideal of a leader. Honest, hard working, they are not served by the people; on the contrary, they give themselves in service to their followers. They are men who are willing to sacrifice in order to serve. They never use demagogic politics or use tricks to keep themselves in power. They never divide to govern; instead, they protect and care faithfully for those they are leading. They are men who have learned that to be first it is necessary to be willing to be the last. Under no circumstance do they speak wrong of others, not even in time of pressure or crisis. Clear elements in the lives of Moses and Joshua mark the difference between those who provide mediocre leadership and those who impact others for good.

### **The Legacy of a Good Leader (Deut. 31:1-8)**

There are those who hold on to power as if their lives depended on it. At whatever cost they seek a thousand ways to keep themselves in the place where they have been governing. This is unlike Moses, who knew when the moment had come to pass down his power. Although Moses made obvious mistakes, they did not diminish the quality of his leadership. He passed down his power with honesty and loyalty. He was able to prepare Joshua and to make him successful. He gave him all the knowledge he had and was not selfish in giving his support.

In addition, he was not left alone as he passed on his power. He confided in Joshua his own reason for success: "Be strong and courageous, for you must go with this people into the land that the Lord swore to their forefathers to give them, and you must divide it among them as their inheritance" (Deut. 31:7, 8, NIV). Then he gave Joshua his unconditional support in the presence of the whole congregation. How different is this attitude from the ways of those who attempt to discredit those who will follow them in their position of responsibility! What a contrast from those who attempt to appear before their successor as better by showing the weaknesses of the other, especially if it is a young or inexperienced person! Moses was a great man and a good leader till the end of his days. His best legacy was to prepare a disciple worthy of what he had done. Joshua's leadership is the extension of Moses' leadership. We often forget this, and we tend to undermine the inheritance of a good leader with the successes of his successor. Joshua was successful not only because he was united to God, but because of the splendid legacy left by his master, who knew how to guide him.

### **From Promise to Attitude to Action (Josh. 1:1-18)**

Joshua could have rested on his laurels. Even without becoming the leader of the new Hebrew nation, he would have been remembered in history as a resolute, capable, and courageous man. Yet he went further. He gave his best. He invested his best efforts in maximizing his potential.



The Bible often summarizes in a few lines an enormous amount of ideas. Joshua's early experience furnishes a sequence that summarizes his life:

a. He receives an order (Josh. 1:1, 2). God always clearly says what needs to be done; He is never ambiguous.

b. He is given a promise (verses 3, 4). Like many of the promises, this one is conditional and summarizes all that God finally does on behalf of Joshua and the people while they remain faithful.

c. He adopts an attitude (verses 6-9). Not only the promise is necessary; it is also important that the daily character reflect what has been received. This was clearly seen in Joshua.

d. He acts (verses 10-15). Without being overbearing or authoritarian, Joshua leads the people with humility and serenity, considering carefully the responsibility that he has.

e. He receives an answer (verses 16-18). The people understand that they are in the presence of a man who will mark their lives with a unique impression as Moses did, and they decide to obey him.

These texts provide at least two important elements that we need to reflect upon.

**1. A good leader always prepares others.** For the demagogue, or the one who serves for power and his personal benefit, projecting his works are of no interest

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## **They are men who have learned that to be first it is necessary to be willing to be the last.**

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to him. He looks after only his own days. That is not the case with Moses, who from early times prepares the one who will succeed him.

**2. A leader carefully follows divine principles.** In this Joshua is worthy of imitation. He never used his power other than to serve God by serving the people. He used his natural talents and gave the best of himself with the purpose of fulfilling in the best possible way the mission given to him. Today, he is remembered precisely for this virtue.

### **REACT**

1. If you are a leader today, what are you doing to prepare others?
2. If you are not a leader, what are you doing to prepare yourself for the future?
3. Do you live to serve or be served?
4. In everyday terms, what is the difference between serving and being served?
5. What is the difference between a manager and a leader?

# Chosen for a Mission

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Deut. 31:7**

The Bible is full of stories about God asking people to perform specific tasks. Some He asks to free His people from the yoke that oppresses them; others to govern a nation; others to be messengers before His people; and others to pursue risky enterprises. In every occasion God promises that He will help His people. Yet, even with this powerful ally, each individual must do his part.

God saw in Joshua the ideal man to lead the nation. Joshua was “courageous, resolute, and persevering, prompt, incorruptible, unmindful of selfish interests in his care of those committed to his charge, and above all, inspired by a living faith in God.”<sup>1</sup> This great man, in difficult times, showed “quiet, unpretending fidelity.”<sup>2</sup> He remained firm when others wavered and maintained the truth in the midst of danger.<sup>3</sup>

Each of us is chosen of God. We all have a mission. There is room for every-

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## **We all have a mission. There is room for everyone in God’s vineyard.**

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one in God’s vineyard. But “the Lord does not have room for the indolent and the self-indulgent.”<sup>4</sup> To serve God, one must forget self (Matt. 6:24). “Nothing with which we have to do is really small. The varied circumstances that we meet day by day are designed to test our faithfulness and to qualify us for greater trusts.”<sup>5</sup>

God has always rewarded those who are brave and strong in the faith and have been victorious because of divine power and grace, yet His rich and abundant blessings start the moment we decide to obey Him, understanding that true obedience is not a result of fear or coercion but of reverence we pay to the Creator. “True reverence for God is inspired by a sense of His infinite greatness and a realization of His presence.”<sup>6</sup>

## **REACT**

What people do you personally know who exhibit “quiet, unpretending fidelity”? Explain your answer.

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1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 530.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.*, p. 224.

6. *Education*, p. 242.

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*By Jorge Giron, a sophomore religious education major at Chile Adventist University, Chillan, Chile.*

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# The Essential Reality

## EVIDENCE

### Key Text: Josh. 1:9

Every task in life implies a risk. There is no human activity whose endeavor means no possibility of failure. The great work Joshua had before him was not exempt of danger. In times like these, human beings seek ways to compensate for their natural inability to control all situations.

Our world today has a tendency toward anthropocentrism. It is believed without any doubt that human potential can solve every problem. Religious ideologies mixed with psychological insights support the idea that people have the necessary inner "force" to overcome any obstacle they may face.

Abraham Maslow, for example, a humanist psychologist, promotes the idea of the "self-actualization of man." He affirms that the individual who self-actualizes is "less dependent, less of a spectator, more autonomous and self-directed."

This same author adds, "These people become much more self-sufficient and reserved. The determinant factors that control them are basically internal rather than social or environmental. The determinant factors are standards from their

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## It is believed without any doubt that human potential can solve every problem.

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self: inner nature, their potential, abilities, talents, their creative impulses, their continual need of self-awareness, integration and unification, to be more in tune with who they are, what they really desire, what will be their vocation or future."<sup>1</sup>

Carl Rogers, another humanist, holds the point of view that each individual must become a "psychologically independent" being. All this can lead us to believe that a human being needs nothing outside self, including God.

On the other hand, from the perspective of the Christian worldview, the strength of a human being does not lie in oneself but in one's relation to God. Because God exists, we have our being. "For in him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28, NIV). God is the essential reality.

"God . . . is not a distant, impersonal, absolute force or idea or mind. He is a person. He lives. He speaks and has the closest possible relationships with humanity. He plans, therefore historic events are not simply disconnected accidents."<sup>2</sup>

Joshua's fear was not diluted by a distorted self-confidence. He knew he was not alone to face the great task ahead. The words are "be strong and courageous. . . . For the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go" (Josh. 1:9).

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1. Abraham Maslow, *El Hombre Autorealizado: Hacia una Psicología del Ser* (Barcelona: Editorial Kairós, 1993), p. 61.

2. John Fowler, "The Making of a Worldview: A Christian Perspective of Life and Destiny" *Dialogue*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1990, p. 7.

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*By Arnoldo O'Ryan, a sophomore commercial engineering major, Chile Adventist University, Chillan, Chile.*

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# Be Strong!

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: Josh. 1:6, 7, 9**

In our society it is a great honor to be considered a leader. Leadership, without a doubt, gives us power and wins the respect of others. Yet what considerations should Christian leaders make to crystallize their aspirations in such a competitive world? The book of Joshua records three important tips:

**1. Be strong and courageous, for you have a mission (Josh. 1:6).** There is a great need for courage today. We need courage to confess Jesus with our words and actions. Though we may be in the minority, we need courage to express our convictions and to stand up for them. We need to be brave enough to say we are Christians in spite of criticism and ridicule (1 Pet. 2:22, 23).

Joshua had the responsibility to share his heritage with the people. This task was probably more complex than to conquer the land. It required a wise, brave, prudent, and faithful leader.

**2. Be strong and courageous to act according to God's expressed will (Josh. 1:7).** The success of any enterprise has to do with the ability of fully placing

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## When it comes to God's will, every detail is as important as the whole.

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ourselves in the hands of God and cooperating with His will. To follow God's plan is to succeed. When it comes to God's will, every detail is as important as the whole. Joshua was to guide the people of Israel in conquering Canaan, but the success of this mission depended on his surrender to God's will. God's leaders will try to act with prudence. This will identify them as faithful (1 Cor. 4:1, 2). Prosperity comes as a result of wise conduct, and this is a fruit of a complete relationship with the source of wisdom.

**3. Be strong and courageous, for God will be with you (Josh. 1:9).** Satan succeeds when he can induce us to unbelief and discouragement. He rejoices when we don't trust God and His promises. Each of us can have the joy of communion with God. "Every step in life may bring us closer to Jesus, may give us a deeper experience of His love, and may bring us one step nearer to the blessed home of peace."

## REACT

1. What kind of relationship do you have with those around you and your circle of influence?

2. Explain why you agree or disagree that "when it comes to God's will, every detail is as important as the whole."

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\* *Steps to Christ*, p. 127 [Youth Edition].

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*By Ricardo Gonzalez, pastor of the Chillan Viejo Seventh-day Adventist Church, Chillan Viejo, Chile.*

## A Bedside Book

### OPINION

#### Key Text: Josh. 1:8

It's difficult to reconcile God's love and humanity's freedom with the order that Joshua received to follow completely the book of the law. This text presents an absolute conditionality to the "book of the law." If what it says is not followed, the blessings will not be forthcoming. To put it that way sounds as though it means that human will is removed.

The concept "book of the law" suggests rules and laws that limit freedom. But the book of the law was also called the "book of blessings and curses" (Josh. 8:34). This suggests that not only rules were found there but also principles that showed the positive or negative consequences of a certain action.

The book of the law also contained commandments regarding God's love (Deut. 30:16). These are words of encouragement and faith presented as if they were law or at least what we understand today to be law (31:6-8).

In addition, other types of laws are mentioned that today seem unnecessary:

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### **Stubbornness is the mother of many evils, starting with presumption.**

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laws regarding personal hygiene, executing justice, war, and a great number of essential elements to preserve social order. The laws were given to meet the needs of a large group of people.

The people under Joshua's command were not totally aware of God's wonders and miracles performed on their behalf. This was a new generation, who, if they were to trust God expected wonders just like the ones they'd heard of from their parents. These people required directions that their ancestors did not need, at least not the same way. The law contained the major Hebrew beliefs summarized in the New Testament, that is, love God and your neighbor as yourself.

All of this implies that Joshua was urged to meditate upon a book whose major function was to serve him as support and guidance. In this sense the book of the law does not limit the freewill of those who choose to be guided by it. Instead, it gives them elements of judgment that help them to choose better.

Today, just as back then, we need to meditate on the book of the law. Today, we would call it the "book of meditations" or "bedside guide." Not to live our lives according to its teachings is not only less than intelligent, but it shows we do not know what we are doing. Stubbornness is the mother of many evils, starting with presumption. We are presuming every time we act as though we have all the answers and have no need of guidance for our lives.

### **REACT**

What kind of time do you dedicate to meditate on the "book of the law"?

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*By Johnny Burdiles, a junior music major at Chile Adventist University, Chillan, Chile.*

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# RECONNAISSANCE



**“By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given friendly welcome to the spies” (Heb. 11:31, RSV).**



# The Peace of Faith

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Joshua 2; Ps. 34:7; Isa. 57:2; Eph. 3:20**

After Congress passed the Sunday law, Jeff and Greg were in a hurry to head for the mountains. Their minds raced as they tried to process everything that had been happening these last few days. They had heard about the end times in Sabbath School and had felt they knew what would happen, but so far they had been shocked. The world seemed to be crumbling around them.

Their parents had tried to tell them that the Lord would protect them and that they didn't need to hide, but they didn't have the faith their parents did. After several days of driving, they pulled into a remote inn nestled safely in the mountains. This is where they met Suzanne. She was as friendly as the sun is warm, and as soon as Greg and Jeff walked in, she began talking to them as if they were long-lost family. As she showed them to their room, she began asking them some questions and finally discovered they were Sabbath observers. She then relayed

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## **I think sometimes we hear too many horror stories about the end of time.**

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to them a good share of her life story, including her search for truth. She had been praying for several months for a sign, and then they came in. She felt as if God had sent them. She wanted to know all about their faith and then why they had come to her inn. They told her what an awesome and powerful God they served. And she would have believed them if their actions had matched their words. She asked them why they were running if their God was so powerful. They didn't have an answer, but the next morning they started home with a renewed faith in their God.

I think sometimes as Adventists we hear too many horror stories about the end of time. The earth will be in chaos, but Christians are not of this world. We often go through life not realizing the power of our God. Perhaps a nonbeliever can help wake us up sometimes.

This week we will be studying about Rahab and the spies of Israel. When I reread the story, the thing that stood out in my mind was the faith of Rahab (a nonbeliever). After she reported to the spies how frightened the people of Jericho were, the spies relayed the message to the Israelites, who replied, "The Lord will certainly give us the entire land" (Josh. 2:24, TLB). God used Rahab to reawaken His people to His power.

Perhaps we, too, as Adventists, can learn a thing or two from our non-SDA friends. Can we look ourselves in the mirror and say that our actions match our words?

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*By Sara-Beth Swanson, a freshman English/history/pre-law major at Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska.*

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## Four Strikes Against Her, and She Still Won

### LOGOS

#### Joshua 2

Joshua and Jericho make a much better children's story than does Rahab the harlot. Faith in God, leading to the second parting of the Red Sea and the falling of the walls of a strong city, are much better illustrations of what we want our young people to grasp than is the story of a heathen woman practicing the oldest profession in the world and lying about God's people. And then to make matters worse, she made God's Hall of Fame—and Joshua didn't (see Hebrews 11)!

As Joshua 2 opens we can be comforted and secure as we witness that great man of God carefully blending faith and works into the Spirit-directed plan for the return of the Israelites to their homeland. God had just encouraged Joshua, and he had responded with his own actions with that trust so as not to be accused of blind faith. Remembering Moses' fiasco with the spies 38 years earlier, Joshua decides to send his search party out secretly, trusting God but still doing his part in acting responsibly with that with which he had been entrusted. A fine blend of faith and works; a balance I would be proud to illustrate in my Sabbath School class.

But the first place the spies go is to the home of Rahab. Four strikes against this hostess: (1) she was a woman (a second-class citizen, at best); (2) she was a Canaanite (a heathen); (3) she was a prostitute (a person of ill repute even in those days); (4) she was a liar (at least it was for a good cause, right?). I want to believe that God did not need this type of person on His side.

There must have been some supernatural way that He could have delivered these men from the Canaanite military. She probably did not even know what faith was. Hebrews 11:31 may say, "By faith Rahab . . .," but I wonder if it was not really more "by *fear* Rahab . . ." Joshua 2:9 begins her discourse on the certainty of Jericho's fall and the destruction of its people. With her successful lie and equally reliable means of escape, Rahab strikes a deal with the men on the military fact-finding mission: your lives for the lives of me and my family. And after all that, James 2:25 confirms that she was "considered righteous for what she did." Salvation came to her house, and through her house came the Messiah!

Doesn't God care how hard that story will be to tell to our children? Doesn't He understand that the righteous are rewarded and the sinners—well, they are not something we wish to talk about. Or maybe it is we who do not understand, and this may make a very good story to teach our children, no matter what our age may be. With all due respect to Joshua, the great leader of God's people, maybe the great lesson of Joshua 2 is that God loves honoring people's faith and trust, no matter what the level of growth and experiential success in the spiritual journey. To make His point, He looks at humanity's judgment of the lowest of the low and demonstrates that simple faith, ignorant faith, yes, even misguided and ill-motivated faith is honored by God and useable in His great plan for the salvation of His people entering old and new Canaan. Perhaps God could look at us in the same justifiably condemning way that we look at Rahab and say of us, "What a poor illustration of faith compared to Me." And He would be proved

right when He speaks and justified when He judges (Ps. 51:4).

Next time I teach the children about Joshua and Jericho, I think I will add the story of Rahab. I'll spend less time on the great coverup, escape, and subsequent falling walls and more time on the beautiful lesson of a sinner's simple and even misguided faith that worked wonders for the spies and the children of Israel. More important than how many times they walked around the wall is how willing God is to take any demonstration of our faith, no matter how immature or even inaccurate, and make something great out of it. I like the story of Rahab, not because she was a prostitute, but because she was willing to exercise her incomplete faith, and God honored her for that. I guess He did know what He was doing in Hebrews 11:31. I pray that I will not wait until perfection before

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## **Doesn't God care how hard that story will be to tell to our children?**

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I exercise my faith and trust in the God who is faithful, even to prostitutes. Thank You, God, for bringing me back to humble reality. We are all Rahabs in a million different ways.

### **REACT**

1. What relevance, if any, does the story of Rahab have to the subject of lying for a good cause?
2. Can you think of any other such examples in Scripture?
3. How do you think God would define the word *lie*?

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*By Rich Carlson, chaplain at Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska.*

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# An Active Faith

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Josh. 2:9-11**

“The advancing hosts of Israel found that knowledge of the mighty workings of the God of the Hebrews had gone on before them, and that some among the heathen were learning that He alone was the true God.”<sup>1</sup>

Among the heathen who accepted the Hebrews’ God as the true God was a harlot by the name of Rahab in the town of Jericho. She had heard about the parting of the Red Sea and the plagues that had preceded their release from Egypt. And recently there had been the Hebrews’ defeat of the kings of Midian, Gilead, and Bashan. Rahab had heard and she believed in the God of the Hebrews.

When the two spies came to Jericho, Rahab put her faith to work. She made a pact with the spies that she and her family would be spared when the Hebrews conquered Jericho. If Rahab had not acted on her belief in God and the faith she had in His power, she and her family would have died.

Rahab was not the only one in Jericho who believed in the God of the Hebrews.

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## “There were many who shared Rahab’s conviction, though they refused to obey it.”

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“All these events were known to the inhabitants of Jericho, and there were many who shared Rahab’s conviction, though they refused to obey it.”<sup>2</sup> Others could have been saved when the Hebrews conquered Jericho, but they refused to act on their belief. They did not exercise their faith as Rahab did.

Rahab had heard about the ways that God had led the Hebrews out of Egypt to the border of Canaan. The miracles and the victories were all impressed upon her mind. The two spies did not have time to give her Bible studies. She had to develop her faith based upon the witness of the works of the Hebrews’ God. But having that faith and believing that the Hebrews’ God was the true God was not enough. She also had to act upon her faith. Others had believed as she did, but they refused to act and lost their lives.

God works in each of our lives. He shows us in nature, in biblical examples, and in the death of Christ on the cross that He is God. But, like Rahab, we must act. It is not enough simply to believe. Some in Jericho did believe. But they died because they did not act. Let us, today, renew our commitment to our faith in God, and let us never fail to act on that faith.

## REACT

1. How would you define *faith* as Rahab demonstrated it?
2. What implications does Rahab’s faith have for a Christian?

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1. *Prophets and Kings*, p. 369.

2. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 492.

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By Rick Moyer, a senior theology student at Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska.

# True to the Pledge

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Josh. 2:12-21; Exod. 31:12-17**

With impending doom the topic of the day, Rahab somehow saw a glimmer of hope. Perhaps she saw that hope expressed in the faces of two men, sent to search out her homeland, in much the same way another outcast heard hope in the voice of Jesus as He told her food for children was not meant for dogs. Rahab tenaciously clung to that hope. She begged for a pledge of safety and a sign of that pledge. The manner in which the pledge was given, and the conditions attached to that pledge, afford lessons of hope for us today.

Typically a pledge was established, not by the beneficiary, but by the benefactor. The two spies, as benefactors, gave explicit instructions as to how Rahab was to receive those benefits. The cord must be scarlet—not green, black, or even golden. It must be tied to the window through which the young men escaped—not to the back window. Last, she must remain silent about the nature of their visit to

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## The cord must be scarlet—not green, black, or even golden.

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Jericho. Only in accepting and fulfilling the conditions of the pledge would she and her family find refuge and life.

Years earlier the Israelites fulfilled the pledge of Passover. They placed the blood of the lamb over the door and on the doorposts with hyssop. “Had the Israelites disregarded in any particular the directions given them, . . . they would not have been secure. They might have honestly believed that they had done all that was necessary, but their sincerity would not have saved them.”<sup>1</sup>

At Sinai the Israelites were given a covenant, which they broke. But they had been taught the Sabbath. They had pledged to obey God’s voice. “This is the pledge that God’s people are to make in these last days. Their acceptance with God depends on a faithful fulfillment of the terms of their agreement with Him.”<sup>2</sup> “The covenant that God made with His people at Sinai is to be our refuge and defense.”<sup>3</sup>

When we fully realize that the enmity of the natural heart keeps us from fulfilling the pledge, when we finally realize death is the end of what seems right to us, then we may enter into the hope that Rahab had. Searching out the way that is right in the eyes of the Lord is our only security. He is true to His pledge.

## REACT

How do you square the statement that “their sincerity would not have saved them” with the concept of a loving God?

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1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 278.

2. *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1103.

3. *Ibid.*

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By David H. Thiele, accounting student at Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska.

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## From Rahab With Love

### HOW-TO

**Key Text: Joshua 2**

From Rahab to my dear son Boaz:

Because I will soon rest with your father, I desire to give you this written record of the beginning of my faith in Jehovah. From your boyhood I have taught you to trust and obey Jehovah, but it was not always so with me. I was a devoted worshiper of Asherah. Her worship involved degradation too shameful to describe. I was not often aware of the deep yearning in my soul for a better way. I had heard of Jehovah's power over the gods of Egypt and of the parting of the Red Sea, and I began to feel a deep conviction. Others felt it too. Our practices were grossly immoral, and we knew Israel would march on Jericho as well.

I desired the security that Jehovah gave the Israelites. I often sobbed myself to sleep at night as the emptiness of my life echoed who I was—a Canaanite harlot. Who was I that Jehovah should give me His security? I will always remember the evening my mind was turned to Mount Peor, where Israel had given them-

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### How could it come true for me? How could I face the changes?

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selves to Canaanite gods. Many were punished for their sin, and I realized that Jehovah had no favorites. He hated immorality and idolatry, not a certain race or class of people. For the first time, I experienced hope for the same forgiveness that He'd shown many of His people at Mount Peor. I felt so warm at the thought that it could be a reality for me. But as I lay on my bed thinking of it all, I experienced nervous doubt. How could it come true for me? I cried out to Jehovah and chose then to obey that deep conviction and to trust the God of Israel. That was the day before Baruch and Phineas came to my inn.

I have written this record so that you, Boaz, and those after you may know how to benefit from my experience. Remember always to:

1. Trust that Jehovah will take out of your life those things that will cause you harm.
2. Understand that God has no favorites; He loves all people and hates all sin.
3. Be alert to evidence of Jehovah's power in your life.
4. Choose to obey the convictions that that evidence will surely bring.

### REACT

1. What evidence do I have of God's power in my life?
2. Others in Jericho were convicted like Rahab. Why was she chosen to be the "Noah" of Jericho?
3. What parallels do you see between this story and Jesus' parable of the lost sheep?

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*By Mike Stump, director of the Magabook program at Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska.*

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# The Vision Thing

## OPINION

**Key Text: Josh. 2:11; Isa. 55:9**

The examples of Joshua and Rahab provide tremendous opportunities for thought. How can we apply the principles taught in Joshua 2 to the 1990s?

What type of leadership should we encourage? Should we be satisfied with leaders who are content with the status quo long after the quo has lost its status? Major issues face our church: Should we ordain women as pastors? How should our church structure change in an age of phones, fax machines, computers, and rapid air travel? How can we develop boards for our church organizations that are interested, competent, visionary? How can we more effectively invest resources to share the news of a soon-coming Saviour?

It is extremely easy to look at what has been accomplished rather than what could be accomplished. In the years preceding 1901, our leaders witnessed a membership growth rate of 15 percent a year. But Ellen White encouraged them to look at what could be accomplished rather than what had been accomplished. Though she had stoutly defended our leaders, she told them, "You have no right to manage unless you manage in God's order." It is much easier to fund yester-

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## Would we ever let our leaders select Rahab as the Adventist Woman of the Year?

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day's opportunities and today's problems than to know how to lead effectively into the Promised Land.

Joshua could easily have concluded that God directed His people to wander in the wilderness for 40 years; therefore, perhaps another 40 years would be in order. This is the at-least-wait-until-I-retire syndrome.

Though we need leaders who are skilled in interpersonal relations, we need those leaders to share an exciting vision. For "where there is no vision, the people perish" (Prov. 29:18).

The experience of Rahab brings hope to people in vastly differing circumstances. Rahab had seen how God had guided the Israelites. After detailing to the spies some of the reports she had heard, Rahab declared, "The Lord your God is God in heaven above and here on earth" (Josh. 2:11, TEV). The spies promised protection to a lying prostitute when Jericho was taken. Of course, their lives were at stake. Though Rahab's insight is impressive, it is even more encouraging to witness God's response! Rahab is included in Hebrews 11, the great Hall of Faith chapter! Would we ever let our leaders select Rahab as the Adventist Woman of the Year? God does not condone our wrong actions. But He is eager to find those who are enthusiastically seeking Him.

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\* *General Conference Bulletin*, April 3, 1901.

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*By George Gibson, chairman of the humanities division, Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska.*

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# CROSSINGS AND PASSAGES



**“He said to the Israelites, ‘In the future when your descendants ask their fathers, “What do these stones mean?” tell them, “Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground” ’ ” (Josh. 4:21, 22, NIV).**

# I Will Remember You

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture:** Ps. 111:5, 6; Josh. 4:23, 24

My uncle died in a car accident when I was four years old. I had never known him very well, but after he died, my grandma frequently took me along when she put flowers at his grave. As we stood by the grave, she would tell me what he had been like and what things he used to do. I soon felt as if he had been a close friend of mine, and we promised then to remember him always.

As time passed, we went to his grave less frequently and talked about him less and less, and soon I rarely thought of him at all. Then a couple of years ago, my family was given cause to gather around his graveside again and bittersweet tears were shed as the happy times were recalled and feelings of longing to see him again were rekindled.

Memorials are important because they remind us of things that we never really intended to forget but that have somehow been lost in the hurry and scurry of life. Things and people that at one time played an integral part of our lives sometimes

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## As time passed, we went to his grave less frequently.

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need something to tug them back to memory to remind us how important they once were and still are.

Through time, human nature has remained much the same. The Israelites share this peculiar practice of forgetting things that should have held first priority in their minds. Like me, they had become acquainted with the acts of the forgotten person through the stories passed on from one generation to the next. While grumbling their way through the wilderness, dining on the same menu day after day, and wearing the same clothes year after year, the children of Israel probably found it quite easy to forget the obstacles that God had helped their ancestors overcome before. Their thoughts focused on their immediate circumstances and had strayed far from the One who had brought their fathers out of the land of their oppression. They, like we, needed memorials to remind them of these things they had so easily forgotten. They needed a constant reminder of the importance of the part they played as His chosen people in carrying out His special plan.

For this reason, God instructed Joshua to have the people build up a monument and to reinstate the practices of circumcision and the Passover. The monument and the Passover celebration would serve to remind them of what they had accomplished in the past through God's guidance, and the circumcision would be a continuing reminder of their special calling as a people set apart for God's purpose as well as being a sign of the renewal of the covenant.

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*By Janna Pike, a junior elementary and music education major, Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska.*

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## Rite of Passage

### LOGOS

**Josh. 3:1–5:12**

As she begins her driving test, a nervous 16-year-old grips the steering wheel with her sweaty palms. A graduate straightens his tie for the eighth time as he prepares for his first day of work. Seeing their newborn child, a young couple quickly count his toes (“Ten! Yes!”).

Each of these individuals is experiencing one of many “passages” in life. Some of these passages are easy and painless; others exact a fearsome toll. Nonetheless, each passage needs to be faced, and lessons need to be learned so we can move on.

The nation of Israel also experienced various passages. With each they gained new insight into the character of their God and of themselves. One such pivotal passage took place in the spring while the Israelites camped on the muddy banks of the flooded Jordan River.

It was a time of transition. Behind them lay the barren wilderness; ahead beckoned a promised and fruitful haven. But between the two loomed an ominous body of water. There were no bridges. No ferries. Only their God.

### A Faithful God

Three days the Israelites camped before the Jordan. Three days. I imagine they were filled with questioning. How will we cross? What does God expect us to do? What will God do? Sure, 40-some years ago He parted the waters for our ancestors, but that was then; this is now! Considering the many times that we have disappointed Him in the last 40 years, will God save us again?

Israel would receive an answer to their questions and a picture of God’s character—His faithfulness. The crossing would fulfill God’s promise to the patriarchs to place Israel in the land of Palestine. Despite Israel’s unfaithfulness, God would be faithful.

And He would also show Israel His faithfulness by being present in the midst of the passage. The ark of the covenant, signifying God’s presence, was to lead the way. The priests were to be the first to place their feet in the water as the rest of Israel curiously watched. As herds of sheep, carts filled with personal belongings, and families made their way, they were to remain some 3,000 feet away from the ark. This ensured that the maximum number possible would be able to see the ark standing firm as a sign of God’s guidance and presence.

### A Powerful God

The second characteristic of God revealed to Israel was His power. “The water from upstream stopped flowing. It piled up in a heap a great distance away, at a town called Adam in the vicinity of Zarethan, while the water flowing down to the Sea of Arabah (the Salt Sea) was completely cut off” (Josh. 3:16, NIV). The waters of the Jordan were dammed 15 miles up river from where they crossed. In addition, the arteries that fed the Jordan south of Adam were also stopped.

This miracle may be explained as God breaking free from natural forces by setting up an invisible dam. Or God may be seen as using the forces of nature in

a supernatural way. "Since rock slides have occurred near Adam temporarily stopping the Jordan (in A.D. 1267, 1906, and 1927), the suggestion is often made that God used this means here."\*

This demonstration of power provided Israel not only with a much-needed means of passage, but it signaled God's ability to lead them through future passages. Formidable obstacles would arise against Israel, even in the Promised Land. They would confront city-states that needed to be overthrown, the influences of more advanced cultures, and the lure of foreign religious deities. God's power to part the Jordan, however, served as assurance that He would dispose of any future enemy (Josh. 3:10).

Once they had crossed over, they were to construct a memorial. This memorial served as a reference point, a reminder of God's power when they became discouraged with future passages. God's reputation would also precede them and

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## **Forty-some years ago He parted the waters for our ancestors, but that was then; this is now!**

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place fear within other nations (5:1). God's faithful presence was always accompanied by His extraordinary power.

This week, take the time to return to the memorials that you have set up in your mind. Catch a fresh picture of God's faithfulness and power in whatever passage you're going through. And remember that He will be with you in all future passages.

### **REACT**

1. What spiritual "passages" have you experienced in your life?
2. How can a Christian avoid the natural human tendency to forget God's influence in life?
3. Why was it important for the Israelites to be able physically to see the ark of the covenant as they crossed the Jordan?

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\* Leon Wood, *A Survey of Israel's History* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1970), p. 171.

# Magnified by God

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text:** Josh. 3:7

Ellen White tells us that worldly honors often have no relation to character, whereas the outward honor that comes from God testifies to the presence of God's character within.

Joshua was established by God (Josh. 3:7). His true honor came from a divine source. Joshua's attention was on God's interest, and he was concerned about the example he was setting. He didn't think of himself but only of God's plans and how he could be used. God magnified him, and because of his humility, he was chosen for a special mission.

Joshua was "courageous, resolute, and persevering, prompt, incorruptible, unmindful of selfish interests in his care for those committed to his charge, and, above all, inspired by a living faith in God—such was the character of the man divinely chosen to conduct the armies of Israel in their entrance upon the Promised Land."<sup>\*</sup>

Joshua's close connection with God gave him opportunities beyond our imag-

## I was anxious to hear what these great people might have to say.

ination. We, too, can live the way Joshua did—completely dedicated, forsaking selfish desire, and honored by God.

Sometimes we seek only the honor of humans. In our seeking of God's honor, we should humbly present ourselves before humanity. If, perhaps, we would gain honor only from humanity, what a tragedy it would be in the end!

As God introduces Joshua in heaven, I'm sure He'll have impressive honors, titles, and qualifications to list. Perhaps Joshua may not have even realized all he had done for God. He will stand and willingly admit that without God he is nothing. Just as when he lived here on the earth, he will give God the glory.

What a challenge it is to forget about the world and seek God's honor. Joshua wasn't chosen by God because he was the most popular guy on the block. He was chosen by God because Joshua had chosen God to be the most popular Guy in his life.

## REACT

1. Why is it so easy to fall into the trap of always seeking the approval of others?
2. In everyday terms, how can we sincerely seek the honor of God?

<sup>\*</sup> *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 481.

*By Carla Andersen, an accounting and computer science major, Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska.*



# Shocking the World

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Josh. 5:1**

What does the Israelites' crossing of the Jordan have to do with us?

Background: For the Canaanites, the Jordan had been their line of defense. This made them feel secure, especially since the river was in its flood stage. They trusted in the number of soldiers they had and in their mighty fortified cities. They thought nobody could invade them. When they heard that Israel had crossed the Jordan, they were shocked. When they learned that the Israelites had crossed because of a divine miracle, their hearts failed them.

"To the Canaanites, to all Israel, and to Joshua himself, unmistakable evidence had been given that the living God, the King of heaven and earth was among His people, and that He would not fail them nor forsake them."

When Israel crossed the Jordan, the most important, influential people took notice. Those who had not believed in the God of Israel were forced to reevaluate their stance when a spectacular miracle had just taken place. They must have

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## When Israel crossed the Jordan, the most important, influential people took notice.

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trembled just a little to see that the Israelites had a power greater than themselves working for them.

Here's where we come into the picture of this story. Wouldn't it be great if as Seventh-day Adventist Christians we made the world stand up and take notice of our God? Instead of having the world recognize us as people who are associated with David Koresh or people who don't wear jewelry or people who don't eat meat or people who put down other religions or people who are judgmental when others don't fit the mold, what if others would notice us for whom we worship?

The greatest miracle we can display is our joy and hope. In a world in which divorce rates are high and true love is low, where violence is rampant and peace is scarce, where anger is abundant and forgiveness rare, we can point to a better way. We can reveal that happiness comes from hope. We can live with peace because a great God lives within us. The most important, influential people will take notice when we make known that the greatest miracle that God performs is the one within us—taking us from despairing death to everlasting life!

## REACT

1. What is the difference, if any, between telling the truth and living it?
2. What can you do in your world to make others notice your God?

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\* *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 485.

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*By Brenda Hardt, a freshman psychology/journalism major, Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska.*

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# Blessed Assurance

## HOW-TO

**Key Text:** Josh. 3:9-13

No time like the present. Even procrastinators act according to this premise. So what about us? A coming test of such great magnitude—that all to be shaken will be shaken—is now upon us. A letter written nearly 90 years ago reads, “Study the third and fourth chapters of Joshua, recording [Israel’s] preparation for and passage over the Jordan into the Promised Land.”<sup>1</sup> The rewards will be the preparation of our own souls for the passage through tribulation into the Promised Land.

**1. Look to the ark of the covenant.** God’s immutable law resides within this type of portable throne. God would have us acknowledge His law as the banner of love. Obedience by faith is the test of loyalty.

**2. Follow the Priest.** Jesus is not only the Lawgiver but our High Priest. We are called to follow His example. In every tribulation we pass through, His feet are the first to get wet. To have the unshakable knowledge that we tread where He has already trod is truly blessed assurance.

**3. Sanctify yourself.** To sanctify something means to set it aside for a special

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## God would have us acknowledge His law as the banner of love.

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purpose. How special am I (in God’s eyes) if I do things after the manner of the world? Joshua might as well have said, “Mortify yourselves!” Jesus so set Himself apart as special to God that He did nothing except the will of His Father.

**4. Come hear the words of the Lord.** There are three ways to know God’s voice: the Bible, the leading of Providence in our experiences, and the impressions of the Holy Spirit on our hearts. First consult the Bible.<sup>2</sup>

**5. Make memorials by repetition.** Selective retention is a great phenomenon. It is reinforced by repetition. One of God’s memorials that was repeatedly taught (approximately 14,400 times) was the Sabbath as reinforced by manna.

**6. Circumcise the heart.** Let the love of God soften the heart. Sensitivity to our duty toward God and humankind is what this is all about.

**7. Remember the Lord’s Supper.** For 40 years the Israelites abstained from the Passover because they had desired to return to Egypt rather than advance to Canaan. When we partake of the Lord’s Supper, let’s set our hearts’ desires on advancing to heaven, not on the things of this world.

## REACT

1. Explain how the law can be considered a “banner of love.”
2. How balanced are you in the three ways of knowing God’s voice?

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1. *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 994.

2. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 512.

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*By David H. Thiele, an accounting student, Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska.*

## Our Own Civil War

### OPINION

**Key Text: Rom. 15:5**

Reflecting on my life, it is all very clear to me how I got here and how I have survived the hard times. Even though the majority of my life has been spent in a “spiritual wilderness,” God has always been my guide, protecting me from myself and others and keeping me from harm’s way. Likewise, God is, and always has been with His church. He is still there, longing for us to let Him be our God—waiting to help us cross over the River Jordan into the Promised Land.

Though the object of God’s supreme regard is still His church, there are, unfortunately, many similarities between it and Israel of old. We have hardened our hearts and kept Christ from His second advent, and now we even have a civil war that has erupted in our church over who is to blame. Will all this fighting amongst ourselves bring Jesus back any faster? How can we, as a church, come out of our spiritual wilderness? How long will we stand on the banks of the Jordan and look over into the Promised Land before we allow God to work in our lives?

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### **We even have a civil war that has erupted in our church over who is to blame.**

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He is longing to return to His people, but He must first have a unified church before He can come back.

We can accuse the brethren all day long. We can say that they are in apostasy, but talk is cheap when you don’t have a living faith. Condemning the Adventist Church has only been destroying the message that she has been commissioned to deliver to the world. We must look at ourselves individually to see if something can be done there first. We must ask ourselves if we are living up to the light that we have and if there is something that we, as individuals, can do to bring our beloved Messiah back a little faster. Can we not see that this civil war is part of the elaborate plan devised by Satan to destroy God’s church? We certainly cannot come out of Laodicea if we do not have unity! Why can’t we see that God is with all His people? Why don’t we look back and remember how He has led us all out of Babylon? God’s church (all of it) will go through!

Let us all come together in love and unity to finish the work that has been laid before us. Let us end this civil war and start praying for each other. Let us allow God to do His work through us—one to another. O Israel, let us cross over the Jordan into the Promised Land together!

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*By Robin Sansonetti, Jr., a freshman theology major, Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska.*

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# SEVEN DAYS IN JERICHO



**“By faith the walls of Jericho fell, after the people had marched around them for seven days” (Heb. 11:30, NIV).**

# Dear Diary

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Josh. 6:1-25**

Dear Diary:

Today, the takeover of Jericho started. I waited many days and told no one except my immediate family of this day. The Israelite spies that came to me oddly enough wanted only military information. I felt the presence of God, so when the king's soldiers demanded the spies' whereabouts, I hid them in flax on my rooftop, telling the soldiers they left before the gates closed for the night. I believe in this God of Israel, but just marching around the city is surely a peculiar way to destroy it. Armed men, trumpeting priests, priests with the ark of the covenant, then more armed men—followed by all the remaining Israelite men. Other than the blaring trumpets, I heard only the sound of sandals against the earth.

Now I'm confused; from my window I see the Israelite families eating supper and preparing for night. I see no preparation for war. The others of my city seem apprehensive but laugh at today's march. I, in turn, believe in Israel's God. I

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### **Just marching around the city is surely a peculiar way to destroy it.**

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remember the story of how the Israelites crossed the Red Sea. The scarlet cord hangs from my window. I notified my family to pack their belongings and move into my home tomorrow. Good night, Diary. *Rahab*

Dear Diary:

Today marks the fourth day of that peculiar march around Jericho. My home is crowded with all my relatives. Fortunately for my sake, my mother and sisters help with the cooking and general housekeeping. It's been four days, but I still believe. Good night, Diary. *Rahab*

Dear Diary:

I still shake from today's events. When the Israelites marched around Jericho the second time, I called my family together, telling them we must be ready to get out. Then the Israelites proceeded to march around five more times for a total of seven times on this seventh day. At the end of the seventh lap, I heard a tremendous noise; all the Israelites shouted. And, Diary, can you believe it: the strong fortress of Jericho fell down. Never have I seen such power. Many people died instantly. The spies, seeing my scarlet rope, came to my home to rescue me and my family before the remaining inhabitants died by the Israelites' sword. Joshua also instructed the people to take all the gold, silver, bronze, and iron for the temple treasury. My family is safe. And I will always tremble before my God, who saves me. Good night, Diary. *Rahab*

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*By Ann Baynard Waite, pediatric office nurse, Blue Mountain Medical Group, Walla Walla, Washington.*

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# A Shout for Victory

## LOGOS

Josh. 5:13–6:27

To a great degree, the battle of Jericho wasn't a battle at all. There was no plan of attack and no implements of war. The people who marched around the city were ordinary people no different from you or me. They were not required to be brave or physically aggressive. They simply needed to be there, do what God asked them to do, and experience His mighty destruction of this great city.

### Who's Side Are You On, Lord? (Josh. 5:13, 14)

Do you find it strange that the commander of the army of the Lord would answer this way? When Joshua encountered the man with the drawn sword, the Israelites were in enemy territory near the city of Jericho. It is almost certain that during this time Joshua and his men were planning the attack of Jericho. They were trying to figure out how *they* were going to take this great city for the people and for God. To Joshua's earnest question, why would the Lord answer "Neither"? Two very important spiritual points are made by the "neither" response:

1. God is not behind evil. He does not work in conjunction with Satan and does not cause the evil that Satan is responsible for.

2. God will not fight *with* us; He fights *for* us. The part we play is to trust Him and relinquish the battle to Him.

It seems that the Lord is saying to Joshua, "Neither. I am not for your enemies, and I will not fight *with* you. I am going to fight this one *for* you." Joshua must have experienced tremendous peace when he heard this answer from the Lord. Not only was this Man not the enemy, but He was going to fight the entire battle for Israel!

### Friendly Fire (Josh. 6:11)

I wonder if it was difficult for some of the more Type A personality Jews just to march around dusty Jericho each day and then go back to camp. Certainly some of the Israelites appreciated and trusted God in this almost unbelievable plan. There were certainly others, however, who would have preferred a good Old Testament fight. To them, walking around the walls of Jericho hurt their pride and self-image. This is where God's physically nonfatal friendly fire comes into play. In destroying the walls of Jericho, God was showing ancient Israel and the world that He provided the victory. There was no way for them to attack and conquer Jericho. And if they had tried on their own, the loss of human life would have been horrible.

In a spiritual sense, God's provision for justification "by faith apart from observing the law" (Romans 3:28, NIV) is His friendly fire and destroys our claim to any personal merit before Him. We die from God's friendly fire by giving up on ourselves and looking to *the* victory that was won by Jesus. It is the only victory that will save us. As independent, self-reliant human beings, it is extremely difficult for us to give up and hand the controls over to someone else. This process, however, is the key to real Christianity. Reports from the Gulf War detailed tragic accounts of the effect of misdirected friendly fire. God's friendly fire, however, is directed at our self and is designed to bring new life.



### **Walls Collapsing (Josh. 6:20)**

There are unmistakable parallels between the fall of Jericho and the plan of salvation. It is interesting to note that the directions God outlined for the Israelites to follow in the destruction of Jericho had zero physical impact upon the walls actually crumbling. No amount of marching or shouting was going to demolish the walls. Yet the directions were to be followed exactly for God to send His angel to destroy the walls.

Jesus says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. . . . Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:30, 31). The directions that Jesus outlined for us to follow have zero impact on our receiving eternal life. The process of following the directions cannot crumble the wall of sin that separates us from the city of God. Yet the directions are to be followed as Jesus spoke them in order for Him to clear the way to the city.

### **The Prostitute (Josh. 6:22)**

This is my favorite part of the story. The crumbling of the walls pales to this incredible account of a prostitute who shows favor to God's people and saves

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## **I wonder if it was difficult for some of the more Type A personality Jews just to march around dusty Jericho each day.**

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herself and her entire family. Have you ever wondered why God would save a prostitute? Was it the promises of man who saved her (6:22), or did God have His hand in sparing her life? Surely there were others in Jericho at the time of its destruction that were more worthy (at least in humanity's eyes) to be saved. Why did Rahab receive this honor? What do our answers tell us about our perceptions? The shouts of victory that rang on the outside of the walls of Jericho were insignificant to the shouts of salvation that came from Rahab's crowded home. In a sea of death and destruction, they believed and received life.

### **REACT**

1. As a Christian, how far should I go in my efforts to fight life's battles?
2. When faced with a battle, what is our *real* battle?
3. How would you describe the concept of "death to self" to someone who knows nothing about Christianity?
4. What is the single biggest factor keeping us from completely surrendering to God's plan?
5. As Christians, how can we experience the true peace that assurance brings?
6. Can we know before Jesus comes whether we have eternal life?
7. How do you account for Rahab's lie as part of God's plan to destroy Jericho?

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By Jim John, general manager, Tektoniks Corporation, Walla Walla, Washington.

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# And He Woke Up Dead

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: John 15:5**

In the operating room one day, I overheard a doctor requesting that his patient be recovered from surgery in the intensive care unit. "Because," he said, "last year when I performed this surgery my patient woke up dead." It doesn't take much logical reasoning to conclude that people cannot wake up dead. Or can they, spiritually?

Paul says, "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, . . . when you followed the ways of the world" (Eph. 2:1, NIV). And consider the prodigal son: "When he came to his senses, he said, . . . 'Here I am starving to death'" (Luke 15:17).

The story of the Israelites' encounter with God at Jericho provides an incredible lesson in obedience and trust. "Few would follow the directions given through God's chosen servant as obediently as did the armies of Israel at the taking of Jericho. The Captain of the Lord's host did not reveal Himself to all the congregation. He communicated only with Joshua, who related the story of this inter-

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## "Last year when I performed this surgery my patient woke up dead."

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view to the Hebrews. It rested with them to believe or to doubt the words of Joshua, to follow the command given by him in the name of the Captain of the Lord's host, or to rebel against his directions and deny his authority."<sup>1</sup>

But God's plan in this performance was to provide "opportunity for the increase of faith among the Israelites. They were to become thoroughly impressed with the idea that their strength was not in the wisdom of man, nor in his might, but only in the God of their salvation."<sup>2</sup>

Jesus said He came to give us life in abundance, but that without Him we can do nothing. If we are consumed with solving our problems and carrying out our ambitions on our own, we may find ourselves waking up spiritually dead. I'd like to challenge each of us to provide God the privilege of displaying His power in our lives. "He will help His believing children in every emergency if they will place their entire confidence in Him and implicitly obey Him."<sup>3</sup>

## REACT

1. To what extent does God desire our reliance on His power today?
2. What would be the effect in your life if God had control as in Jericho?

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1. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 162.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 163.

3. *Ibid.*

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*By Craig Wilson, registered OR nurse at Walla Walla (Washington) General Hospital.*

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# Faith's Firepower

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Heb. 11:30**

Almost from the instant of birth, children enter a lifelong programming session. A baby, for example, learns that intense wailing can bring food. Toddlers discover that walking provides instant transportation. And teenagers find that part-time jobs help pay for car parts, clothes, and dates. By adulthood, we've learned our lessons well. Unaided, we now know how to make things happen.

Perhaps this self-sufficiency programming is what makes our Christian walk so treacherous at times. How can there be room for faith, room for trust in Someone else, when life's finest rewards are often heaped on those who help themselves?

We speak the words of faith, but the heart fails to follow through. We reserve the right to wage a small portion of spiritual battles on our own. Oh yes, the Lord is in charge. But sometimes we're discontent with marching around the walls of Jericho. Instead of turning our problem over to God, we search for solutions. But

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## How can there be room for faith when life's finest rewards are often heaped on those who help themselves?

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without faith's power, the walls of our Jerichos prove unassailable.

We need faith's firepower to triumph spiritually. The difficulty lies in letting go completely. Only God can successfully plan the battle strategy and wage the war, and He underscores and clarifies these concepts in strange ways. Consider the crusade against Jericho that somehow makes the Hebrews 11 chart-topping acts of great faith. No great military mind would ever seriously consider taking a well-protected city by simply marching around it and playing trumpet tunes. Think about it. The whole strategy was absurd and fated for failure.

That's the beauty of relying on God. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit," God says (Zech. 4:6). By faith, unbelievable things happen.

When we face the unassailable walls of our Jerichos, our task is not to labor for solutions or give up in despair. Instead, the best battle plan is to put aside our self-sufficiency programming and completely place our destiny in God's hands. Where He leads, we follow. What He bids, we do. That faith could topple the mighty walls of Jericho is evidence that trust—not in our own intelligence, resolve, or skills, but in God—can crown us victors over the Jerichos in our lives.

## REACT

What steps must we take to break our self-sufficiency programming and learn to put our faith in God?

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*Kevin Waite is editor of Keeping Well, a health magazine published in Walla Walla, Washington.*

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# Mechanisms for Survival/Success

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: Josh. 5:14**

My research, following the current trend in biology, is a search for mechanisms used by living things to function in a hostile environment. In this segment of the lesson, the search is for mechanisms Christians can use for success in a world largely hostile to Christianity.

Ever been faced with seemingly insurmountable obstacles? Perhaps a physical problem, a mental challenge, or a spiritual trial? Joshua faced them in this situation: the physical problem of how to take the impressively fortified city of Jericho; the mental challenges that came with leadership of the Israelites, who were notoriously fickle throughout their wilderness journey; the spiritual trial of maintaining faith when the solution seemed just too simple—walk around the

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## **The search is for mechanisms Christians can use for success in a world largely hostile to Christianity.**

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city once a day for six days, then seven times on the seventh day and shout. His tactics can help us to meet difficulties 3,000 years later.

**1. Spend time in preparation with the Creator** of the universe—an approach so important that Jesus, Himself the Creator, used it consistently with His Father when He was on earth. This involves reading the Scriptures for general instruction and praying for guidance.

**2. Take time to listen for God's instructions**, which is more often in the form of a still small voice like the one Elijah heard, rather than a face-to-face encounter such as Joshua had, so it requires quiet time.

**3. Obey in every detail**, no matter how inscrutable the impression seems at the moment. Remember that God has good reasons for every command He gives.

**4. Give God the glory for every victory won.** Throughout the struggle, whatever it is, claim God's promises. "With God all things are possible" (Matt. 19:26, NIV). "Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever!" (Eph. 3:20, NIV) These are two texts I find particularly encouraging.

## **REACT**

1. How can I apply these principles to my life?
  2. Can you recall a time when you failed because you neglected one or more of the steps above?
  3. Are such failures inevitable? Explain your answer.
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*By Ron Scott, a graduate student in biology at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.*

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## The Battle's Not Over, but the Victory's Been Won

### OPINION

**Key Text: Josh. 6:2**

Have you ever asked yourself, "How can I possibly make it to heaven?" I have asked myself that many times. If I express such thoughts, I get nice answers like "Salvation is a gift from God." Or, "Don't worry, you don't have to try to get to heaven, because Jesus did it all for you."

There is truth in those words. But why do I still struggle with feelings of uncertainty in regard to my salvation? Could it be that I have focused too much on the outcome of the daily battles and have lost sight of the assured outcome of the war?

As a third-generation Adventist and the daughter of a church worker, I have felt that the primary skirmishes of my life have revolved around issues of standards and behavior—a focus on self. Poor eyesight has caused me to stumble over doubt. Which brings me about-face. Could my doubt about the outcome of the war keep me from winning the battles?

God's assurance to Joshua before the battle of Jericho has helped me see more

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### **The primary skirmishes of my life have revolved around issues of standards and behavior.**

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clearly the answers to my questions. Jericho was already defeated. In my struggle with evil, I have the assurance that God has already overcome the enemy. When Jesus said, "It is finished" as He hung on the cross, He was telling me that the outcome of the war was decided once and for all. "Overwhelming victory is ours through Christ who loved us enough to die for us" (Rom. 8:37, TLB). This victory equals eternal life. "And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life" (1 John 2:25, KJV).

The victory is mine. It's a sure thing. And yet a war continues to rage. I still have to fight. I have standards to uphold and a character that needs refining. But as Ephesians 6:17 says to put on the helmet of salvation, I am to cover myself with the knowledge that my salvation is assured. I can then go to battle with confidence. I may lose a few skirmishes. But those temporary setbacks don't have to make me doubt whether I am good enough to get to heaven. Satan and all his mighty warriors are already defeated, for God has given them to me—and you!

### **REACT**

1. Has the church focused too much on standards and behavior? Explain your answer.
2. What are some practical things that the church could do to help its members focus on the fact that the war has been won?
3. What methods would be best for teaching young people to keep their eyes on Jesus while realizing the importance of church standards?

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*By Linda Harris, a substitute elementary school teacher from Walla Walla, Washington.*

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# TREACHERY IN THE CAMP



**“Get up, sanctify the people, and say, ‘Sanctify yourselves for tomorrow, because thus says the Lord God of Israel: “There is an accursed thing in your midst, O Israel; you cannot stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you” ’” (Josh. 7:13, NKJV).**



# Selfish Desires

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Josh. 7:13**

There was a rich, proud man who was on his way across the Swedish countryside. Carriages were the main mode of transportation in those days. These carriages needed to stop at inns or resting places along the way so the horses could be exchanged and the traveler could continue.

As the rich man rode into the stable area, he called out, "Horses, my dear innkeeper, for my way is far, and I must be on with my journey."

The innkeeper apologized, saying, "I am sorry, sir, but we have no fresh horses left, so you must rest yours before continuing on with your journey."

At that moment a stable hand came out with two fresh horses and started to hitch them to a waiting carriage in which a kindly looking gentleman sat.

The rich aristocrat stormed over to the carriage and in a very brusque fashion

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## The indignant man demanded, "Do you have any idea who I am?"

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announced, "Sir, I would gladly pay you for those horses if you would part with them."

But the gentleman replied, "I have need of these horses as much as you, kind sir, and as such I will be using them."

The indignant man demanded, "Do you have any idea who I am? I am Field Marshall Baron George Sparre, the only and last of my kind!"

The older man replied with a smirk on his face, "That is well indeed, sir, for I should hate to know that there are more like you."

As the selfish nobleman watched the man ride away, the innkeeper said, "I want you to know that the person you just confronted was the king of Sweden."

Is it not like us to get caught up in our own world and forget what we are all about? The rich man was so busy thinking about how important it was to reach his destination that he was inconsiderate not only to the simple innkeeper but also to his king.

Achan was the same. He was so caught up in the awe of having money and honor that he decided it was better to disobey a direct command of God's than to be poor. He gave no regard as to what would happen to himself or to his nation. As author Vern McLellan has said, "He who is green with envy is ripe for trouble."\* We must each day pray that we might stay rotten to Satan's touch and be ripe for only one king, Jesus Christ.

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\* Vern McLellan, *Wise Words from a Wise Guy* (Eugene, Ore.: Harvest House Publishers, 1989), p. 76.

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*By Jeff Rogers, freshman history/broadcast media major, Columbia Union College, Takoma Park, Maryland.*

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# What Do You Mean, “We Won”?

## LOGOS

### Joshua 7, 8

The Israelites were having the time of their lives; they had been protagonists and spectators of God’s magnificent doings. All the big obstacles had been overcome. The Jordan River was behind; the gigantic walls of Jericho were down. With God’s power the Israelites had become so strong that no other nations in the land had the courage to face Israel (Josh. 5:1).

#### **Without God, Any Obstacle Is Bigger (Josh. 7:2-5)**

Now that the big obstacles were out of the way, it was time for the Israelites to take care of small obstacles. The city of Ai was a small city with an approximate population of 12,000 people. Just before Israel crossed the Jordan, a census had been taken by Moses. The number of men counted (20 years old and above) was 601,730 (Num. 26:51). Ai was definitely a small obstacle, considering the numbers. Even Joshua underestimated it by sending only 3,000 men against it (Josh. 7:4). The Israelites were so confident that they forgot the One who gave them victory, resulting in one of the greatest upsets in Israel’s history. Why? Because without God, any obstacle is bigger than we are. Without God, there is only defeat. It does not matter how small our enemy is; if God is not with us, any enemy can become more powerful than we.

#### **Do Not Dwell on the Defeat (Josh. 7:6-13)**

When Joshua learned of Israel’s defeat, he did what any human being would do. He cried, mourned, and wept. He felt helpless and hopeless in the midst of so many enemies. Here is when God’s love is especially manifest in the story. God came to Joshua and told him, “Stand up! What are you doing?” (verse 10, NIV). God did not want Joshua to be crying with his head down like those who have no hope. The time spent dwelling on the defeat is wasted time. That is why God—full of mercy and forgiveness—gave a new opportunity to Israel to achieve victory. He gave them the possibility of a new beginning. They would not be destroyed; they had the chance of repenting and starting again.

God does not believe in self-pity after defeats. He believes in repentance and forgiveness, with a new beginning for those who are willing to accept His mercy.

#### **Assurance of Total Victory (Josh. 7:16-26)**

God told Joshua the cause of the defeat: separation from His leading. When the relationship between God and humans is fragmented, the results are always the same, defeat and ruin for humans. The only way to reestablish the relationship is to remove whatever interferes with our communion with God. A wall separated God from Israel, and the wall needed to be removed for Israel to achieve victory again.

Israel needed to get rid of whatever or whoever was interfering in its relationship with God. They did it (verses 25, 26). Their relationship with God was valued so much, the new opportunity given by God was so highly appreciated, that they were determined by God’s grace not to let anything or anyone destroy it.

Once Israel responded to God’s grace by removing the wall impeding victory,

God spoke again (8:1, 2). He asked the Israelites to attack the city of Ai, and He anticipated the victory. They had not even fought yet, and they were already victorious through God. If we accept God's redeeming grace, we have assurance of victory even before the fight is finished.

Israel totally destroyed Ai (verses 25, 26). With God, we have assurance of complete, permanent victory, not partial or temporal. With God, the victory is total and final.

### **Applications**

1. As Christians we face obstacles daily, just as the Israelites did, but we can be assured that no matter how big the obstacles may be, God can overcome them. Let God lead your life, and no barrier will be able to stand in your way. Like the Israelites, you will be able to overcome it.

2. Without God, any obstacle can become bigger than you and, therefore, virtually impossible to overcome. Remember to keep God in your life. In that way you will be able to prevent an Ai experience in your life.

3. As humans we are sinners and are likely to encounter defeat at some point in our lives. Do not dwell on the defeat. God's mercy is new every morning;

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## **Ai was definitely a small obstacle, considering the numbers.**

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He gives you new chances. Stand up and accept the opportunity to start again. Do not cry over past defeats. Repent and go ahead victoriously.

4. When we accept God's forgiveness and strengthen our relationship with Him, we will automatically try to eliminate whatever or whoever keeps us away from Him. By having a strong alliance with God, our victory will be assured, even before the battle is over. Through God's grace, we have already won the battle, so from today on we can begin to act like winners. That's what we are in Christ Jesus. We've been assured that with God on our side victory over sin and any other enemies will be total and final.

### **REACT**

1. Have you ever been defeated by a small problem? Why?

2. In everyday terms, what does it mean "to have victory before the battle is over"? How can you apply this to your daily living?

3. If you had been a soldier in Israel, how would you have felt upon hearing of Joshua's second plan of attack on Ai?

4. Is there some aspect of your life in which you've suffered defeat but in which God may be asking you to try again?

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*By José H. Cortés, Jr., a senior theology/communications student, Columbia Union College, Takoma Park, Maryland.*

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# The Example of Achan

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Luke 12:15**

Reading Joshua 6:18, 19, we find the following: “And you, by all means keep yourselves from the accursed things, lest you become accursed when you take of the accursed things, and make the camp of Israel a curse, and trouble it. But all the silver and gold, and vessels of bronze and iron, are consecrated to the Lord; they shall come into the treasury of the Lord” (NKJV).

“Achan’s sin was committed in defiance of the most direct and solemn warnings and the most mighty manifestations of God’s power. ‘Keep yourselves from the accursed things, lest ye make yourselves accursed,’ had been the proclamation to all Israel. The command was given immediately after the miraculous passage of the Jordan, and the recognition of God’s covenant of the circumcision of the

**“Covetousness, of all sins [is] one of the most common and the most lightly regarded.”**

people—after the observance of the Passover, and the appearance of the angel of the covenant, the captain of the Lord’s host”<sup>1</sup>

“Of the millions of Israel there was but one man who, in that solemn hour of triumph and of judgment, had dared to transgress the command of God. Achan’s covetousness was excited by the sight of that costly robe of Shinar; even when it had brought him face to face with death he called it ‘a goodly Babylonish garment.’ One sin led to another, and he appropriated the gold and the silver devoted to the treasury of the Lord—he robbed God of the first fruits of the land of Canaan.

“The deadly sin that led to Achan’s ruin had its root in covetousness, of all sins one of the most common and the most lightly regarded. While other offenses meet with detection and punishment, how rarely does the violation of the tenth commandment so much as call forth censure. The enormity of the sin, and its terrible results, are the lesson of Achan’s history.”<sup>2</sup>

## REACT

1. Why is covetousness such a deadly sin?
2. How does one person’s sin affect a whole church?
3. In a church today, what would be the modern equivalent of Achan’s sin?

1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 495, 496.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 496.

*By Edward F. García, respiratory therapist, Washington Adventist Hospital, Takoma Park, Maryland.*

## What, Me Sin?

### EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Matt. 5:27, 28**

Walking through a mall parking lot one day, a 21-year-old man spotted a beautiful car parked directly opposite his own. He feasted his eyes on the sleek black shape, admiring every curve. Looking in the driver's side window, he saw a car phone, CD player, leather upholstery, a fully instrumented cockpit, six-speed gear box, and an automatic sunroof. The hood of the car had a dome on it, indicating a turbo-charged engine. You name it, this car had it. This baby could go 0 to 60 mph in under five seconds.

He walked around the car, admiring the low-profile Pirelli tires hugging the shiny mags. He could just feel the car responding to his gentle touch of the steering wheel, smoothly taking in every curve in the road. How he wanted this car! How easy it would be to just slip in and drive it away.

Looking up, he saw the slowly approaching flashing light indicating mall

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### His breathing eased as the security officer inched by and continued through the parking lot.

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security. Suddenly his palms became sweaty, and his heart raced as he wondered if he looked guilty. His breathing eased as the security officer inched by and continued through the parking lot.

But why was he worrying? He only coveted the car; he wasn't actually going to steal it, right? Can the mall security have him arrested for stealing the car? No. But can the law of God accuse him of sinning? Yes.

Humanity's definition of sin is the physical act. Until you commit the crime, you are not guilty for the simple reason that a fellow human being cannot read your heart. But God defines sin, not as the physical act, but as a desire that has been entertained in your mind.

The moment you realize God's definition of sin, you also realize how warped we have become. This is why we must come to grips with God's definition of sin. We need to be able to see sin from God's point of view to fully understand its impact on our lives.

### REACT

1. According to God's law, when did Achan first sin?
2. Why did Achan, his family, and his possessions deserve what ultimately happened to them?
3. Describe a time when the Lord had to "get tough" with you to change your direction.
4. What relevance does Achan's experience have, if any, to discipline of church employees today? Of church members? Explain your answer.

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*By Jeannie R. Garcia, senior English/prelaw major and speech communication minor, Columbia Union College, Takoma Park, Maryland.*

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# But the Greatest of These Is Love

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: 1 Cor. 13:13**

Growing up with the name Charity has brought interesting comments:

“Do you begin at home?”

“Do you get the coins I throw in the fountain at the mall?”

I used to hate my name and would often think of different names that I liked better. I used to be jealous of my friends with “normal” names like Jenny, Cindy, Stefanie, and Susie. In time I got used to my name and just accepted it; now I like it, and I must admit it has its advantages. If someone yells, “Jenny,” in the mall, at least five or six people turn around; if someone calls, “Charity,” I know exactly whom they want.

I now love comments I used to hate as a child; they are great conversation starters and I meet so many new people. It’s amazing how feelings can change over some-

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## If someone calls, “Charity,” I know exactly whom they want.

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thing so simple as a name. Other people can’t see how pretty something is unless I feel it myself and know it.

God’s love is like that. We know He loves us, but along with knowing, we must also accept His love and share it. He gave us life, love, the earth, and everything in it to show us how much He loved us. He *told* us countless times how much He loved us, but the proof of this was when He sent us His Son to die for us (John 3:16).

If we love someone, we will do anything to make that person happy. God showed us His love so we could have faith in Him and His love and have an action to base our hope upon. Because we have seen His love in action, we have a reason to believe that our hopes in Him and His second coming will not be shattered. He showed us that love is the basis of everything. If we feel love—pure, true, and unadulterated—it is hard to be unkind and to hold mean thoughts. If we have God’s love, we won’t want anything else. If we are filled with God’s love, He will take away all our thoughts of covetousness and greed; rather than wanting to take, we will want to give and show how much His love means to us.

When we accept God’s love in every avenue of our soul, we will be able to make others see how beautiful it is. God is love! Love gives of itself.

## REACT

1. How do we show God’s love when all seems to be going wrong?
2. In everyday terms, how can we change feelings of hate to feelings of love?
3. How are we as a church putting feelings of covetousness above God and His love?

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*By Charity Bruhnke, sophomore business administration/English major at Columbia Union College, Takoma Park, Maryland.*

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# A Tale of Two Cities

## OPINION

**Key Text: Josh. 7:8**

The story told in Joshua 7, 8 is a horrific tale of deceit, mass murder, and intrigue. It bears a striking resemblance to the news we've grown accustomed to every day. There are a lot of disturbing elements to this story.

- A roving army of invaders who kill everything that moves and put whole cities to the torch. In our time this is called "ethnic cleansing."

- A leader who whines like a petulant child the first time his army suffers defeat. The blame is first put on God. When God points out that Israel has broken the covenant of war policies He has established, the blame shifts.

- A covetous individual who has stolen booty and thus caused the defeat of the whole army. Achan is stoned alive and his body and booty burnt. The cancer in the Israelites' midst has been exorcised, and they can return to plundering with courage and hope.

If there's anything redemptive in this story, it may come from a process of

**The cancer in the Israelites' midst has been exorcised and they can return to plundering with courage and hope.**

reading on several levels. The first level is to read it as a story about war, brutal and hellish as it is. We need to read it with our blinders off and assume that it is as true as possible to the facts.

The next level is to ask why this is included in the Bible, alongside such admonitions as "Love your enemies." One implication is that God worked with what He had at the time. In the Old Testament, we witness the ingenuity of God in transforming a ragtag collection of tribes into a people with a purpose. It is a painful process but not bereft of hope.

The third level is to read it as a myth of tragedy and irony. The tragedy is the unavoidable confusion between the commands of a divine being and the impulses of an aggressive people. The irony is that the very thing Israel was condemned for at Jericho—taking the spoils of war—is now part of the operating instructions for taking the city of Ai (Josh. 8:27)!

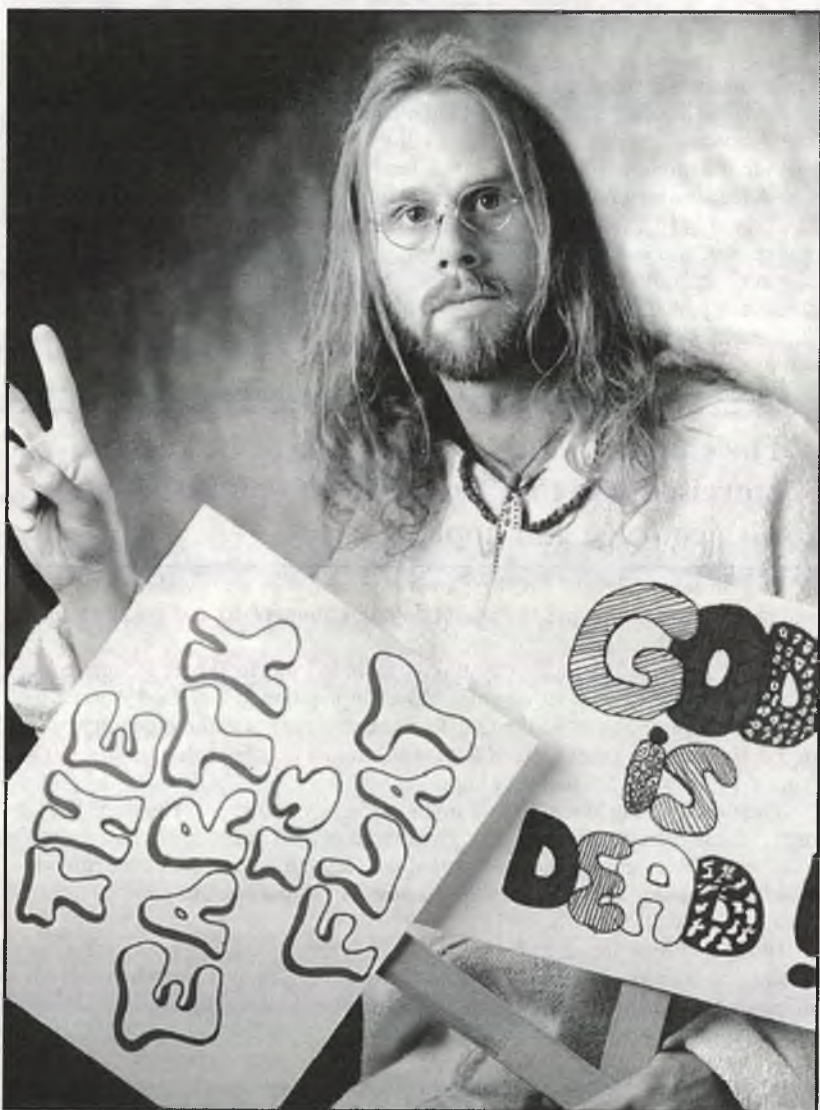
Biblical stories are often complex and disturbing. It does us no good to spiritualize them away as mere object lessons in our fight against sin, when they often illustrate the very worst of the sins we perpetrate on each other.

## REACT

What can the story of Achan and Ai teach us today?

*By Barry L. Casey, chairman of the division of arts and communication and associate professor of communications and philosophy, Columbia Union College, Takoma Park, Maryland.*

# DECEIVED



**“The men of Israel sampled their provisions but did not inquire of the Lord” (Josh. 9:14, NIV).**

# The Deception

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Josh. 9:6**

Have you ever played a really good joke on someone? When I was growing up, I used to love making up stories and seeing whether people would believe them. I liked seeing the trust in people's eyes as they slowly found themselves caught in my web and then finally the anger when they discovered I was lying. It is easy to deceive and maybe easier to be deceived as we get caught in the theatrics of the deceiver.

As I look back, I hope my jokes were relatively harmless. However, it reminds me that we all face deceptions every day. These deceptions are not just pranks. Satan, like a spider, is constantly spinning webs of deception to catch us. How do we avoid his deceptions?

With the lesson learned at Ai still ringing in Joshua's ears, Israel faced the Gibeonite deception. Actually, it was quite a show, possibly even Hollywood

## **Actually, it was quite a show, possibly even Hollywood material.**

material. With their old clothes, moldy food, and stale water, they were very believable.

In fact, the deception was so well planned and rehearsed that anyone would have believed it. And everyone did. But the fact that it was so clever was no excuse. Israel had a secret weapon against all deception, one that could read hearts and discern motives. They only had to call for help. But they didn't. Three days later they learned their mistake.

It would be easy for us to point fingers here. Joshua did make a mistake. He should have prayed. God was waiting to help him. God was waiting to help all Israel.

Deceptions are all around us. They are cleverly planned and well performed. Anyone would believe them. In fact, many do believe them. God is waiting to help us. Do we ask?

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*By Sharon Dyke, graduate student in public health, University of Tennessee at Knoxville.*

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## Just Ask!

### LOGOS

#### Joshua 9

*"It was told to your servants for a certainty that the Lord your God had commanded his servant Moses to give you all the land, and to destroy all the inhabitants of the land before you; so we feared greatly for our lives" (Josh. 9:24, RSV).*

The great alliance of the Canaanite kings in the first two verses of chapter 9 is impressive. It united the six major nations with almost all of the other smaller city-states. Reports about Israel's conquest of the eastern side of the Jordan, crossing of the river, destruction of Jericho and Ai, and, most recently, the gathering of all of Israel for the reading of the covenant would have wiped any questions from the kings' minds. This was definitely more than each of them could handle, and all would need as much help as they could get.

The Gibeonites, however, had no wish to join this compact. They also knew of the Israelites' progress into their country and were convinced that resistance was futile. In the two previous examples of this, a conquered city meant a peopleless one. The elders decided they must find a way to spare the lives of their people.

*Do you think Gibeonite spy reports would have included Rahab's story? How might this have influenced their strategy, if at all?*

*"Be careful not to make a treaty with those who live in the land where you are going, or they will be a snare among you" (Exod. 34:12, NIV).*

The deception was good. Real good. Even though the Israelite leaders realized the possibility that these messengers could just be playing an act, they were convinced. They closely inspected all the travelers and their beasts, sampled the food-stuffs of the group, and decided to go ahead with the treaty. It was just so obvious that this band had indeed journeyed from a great distance. Everything they had seen, heard, felt, tasted, and smelled was compelling evidence. However, they "did not ask direction from the Lord" (Josh. 9:14, RSV).

Any sort of message from the Lord is strikingly absent in this chapter. Joshua and the elders do not consult the Commander of the host either before the treaty or after the discovery of the deception. They didn't learn the lesson so recently given at the first attack on Ai. Confidence was again running high. Why bother the Lord with the details in a situation in which the course of action seems to be so clear? And the aftermath: "Well, we got ourselves into this situation. We need to remedy it. They have said that they will be our servants; we'll make them work for the Lord. Yeah, that's it!"

*What might have happened if the Israelites had asked God's direction? Could the Gibeonites have been predisposed to worshipping Jehovah?*

*"For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light" (Luke 16:8).*

Just as in Jesus' parable of the shrewd manager, it was inevitable that the deception would eventually be found out. All efforts were directed toward obtaining a promise of life. Knowing the strength of the Israelite God and the instructions He had given them, the Gibeonites considered themselves an extinguished nation.

They cleverly calculated to save the lives of their people.

The Gibeonite leaders were obviously counting on the integrity of the Israelites for survival. A vow to the great Jehovah would not be broken, even if garnered illicitly. But there were going to be definite consequences in the discovery. They were now at the total mercy of the Israelites. They had saved their lives, nothing more. That singular objective was accomplished, but at the cost of total servitude of four cities, of both young and old, for generations.

*"I will bring you to the land I swore with uplifted hand to give to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob. I will give it to you as a possession" (Exod. 6:8).*

The Lord's promise from the beginning was that the land Israel would occupy was coming to them as a gift. The only defeat they had suffered resulted from a lack of communication with their heavenly Commander. I AM had promised to bring them in; they were just trying to do it their own way.

Even though the Israelites failed to ask counsel from God, He was still there with them. But countless questions are left about what role the Lord played in this chapter. Is it possible that He had planned that the Gibeonites approach Israel,

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## **Why bother the Lord with the details in a situation in which the course of action seems to be so clear?**

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but that Israel would not be deceived? Why didn't the Lord get the elders' attention with a well-placed bolt of lightning and warn them about the deception? Was it the will of God that the Gibeonites become water carriers and woodcutters, or was that another arbitrary decision made by Joshua and the elders?

Of one thing we can be sure: God was there. The Israelites should have been reminded of His presence by virtue of having the desert temple still in operation. They were also careful not to break the vow made in His name, for fear of His wrath. And the question remains: He was there for the asking; why didn't they ask?

*Have you ever taken an oath that was difficult to keep? How important is the taking of oaths in a Christian's life? Upon what principle or principles should oaths be taken? Why hadn't Israel seen through the deceit of the Gibeonites?*

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*By Laurie Lee, assistant chaplain at Advent House, Adventist Student Center, University of Tennessee at Knoxville.*

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# The Sojourning Stranger

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Lev. 19:34**

The Gibeonite leaders had decided that the only course of action to save their lives was to deceive the Israelites. Was that really their only choice?

“But it would have fared better with the Gibeonites had they dealt honestly with Israel. While their submission to Jehovah secured the preservation of their lives, their deception brought them only disgrace and servitude. God had made provision that all who would renounce heathenism, and connect themselves with Israel, would share the blessings of the covenant. They were included under the term, ‘The stranger that sojourneth among you,’ and with few exceptions this class were to enjoy equal favors and privileges with Israel.”<sup>1</sup>

Sojourners. Strangers. Aliens. People who were not of Israel, yet a part of Israel. At Mount Ebal, where all had gathered to hear the reading of the law, there were, “all Israel, aliens and citizens alike” (Josh. 8:33, NIV). Scattered throughout Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy were instructions regarding the

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## It would have fared better with the Gibeonites had they dealt honestly with Israel.

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treatment of peoples who were a part of the community of Israel but not necessarily directly blood related to the 12 tribes. These were peoples who acknowledged the sovereignty of Jehovah and worshiped Him. As long as they continued to seek the God of Israel, they would reap the benefits and privileges of the covenant relationship that the Israelites shared with the Creator of all humankind.

“[Rahab’s] conversion was not an isolated case of God’s mercy toward idolaters who acknowledged His divine authority. In the midst of the land a numerous people—the Gibeonites—renounced their heathenism and united with Israel, sharing in the blessings of the covenant.”<sup>2</sup>

Sinful people, like the Gibeonites, face a sentence of death. Turning to God is the only salvation that we have. But we don’t have to entreat Him to add us to the safety of His people. We become part of Israel and are fully entitled to all the blessings and privileges that our new relationship affords. The promise of acceptance is there for all. Welcome to the family!

## REACT

1. No matter what the ethnic origin, what did it take for someone to “reap the benefits and privileges of the covenant relationship”?
2. What implications, if any, does this arrangement have for Christians?

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1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 507.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 506.

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*By Laurie Lee, assistant chaplain at Advent House, Adventist Student Center, University of Tennessee at Knoxville.*

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# The Significance of Oaths

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Josh. 9:18, 19**

Before Israel crossed the River Jordan, God commanded them to destroy all the inhabitants of Canaan, that no vestige should remain. Therefore, the events of Joshua 9 invite two questions concerning the judgment and actions of the Israelites. Why did they agree to a treaty with the Gibeonites when there was no legal or diplomatic precedent to do so, and why did they not exact retribution when the deception was discovered?

As to the first, Israel was sufficiently convinced that these delegates were from a country outside the region of Canaan and not subject to destruction. As to the second, Israel was bound to the peace accord by the oath they had sworn in God's name.

When the Israelites made a peace treaty with the Gibeonites, they ratified it with an oath. Such oaths were sacred promises made in the name of the Lord, binding a person to an unbreakable commitment to do or not to do a certain thing. Common practice in the affairs of law and state, the taking of oaths was significant

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## **Israel was bound to the peace accord by the oath it had sworn in God's name.**

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to Israel. God Himself swore by His own name to keep the promises He had made to Abraham. For Israel to swear an oath in God's name made their commitment as inviolate as God's own great covenant to His people. To break such an oath was considered to be a great breach of honor and a flat denial of the Lord as their sovereign.

Israel honored the commitment they had made to the Gibeonites by sparing their lives and making them subject to Israel's rule and dominion. Rather than punishing Israel for not seeking His counsel, the Lord honored their commitment to the oath they had taken by blessing their relationship with Gibeon. A Gibeonite was among David's military heroes (1 Chron. 12:4), Gibeonites helped rebuild the walls of Jerusalem after the exile (Neh. 3:7), and for a time, the tabernacle was set up at Gibeon (1 Chron. 16:39). It is curious to note that Jesus discouraged the taking of oaths (Matt. 5:33-37).

In Joshua 9 the fact that Israel swore by the Lord without seeking His counsel is not as important as their commitment to the agreement they had made. Jesus teaches the same principle, that oaths cannot speak for a person's character and that it is the character, not the oath, that honors a commitment. Therefore, let your character speak for itself, just as God's faithfulness speaks for itself.

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*By Mark Killefer, a senior in video/film production, Pellissippi State Technical Community College, Knoxville, Tennessee.*

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# Living for God

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: Josh. 9:14**

I am a graduate student at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville. Like most students, I get caught up in the hustle and bustle of term papers, exams, and late-night study sessions. I get so busy that I sometimes forget to include the Lord in my fast-paced lifestyle. I start making my own decisions in life instead of seeking the will of God. When that happens, nothing seems to go as smoothly as I had planned. Do you ever find yourself in this predicament? If so, maybe I can offer a few suggestions that I've been trying to follow.

**1. Develop a strong prayer life.** Prayer is how we communicate with the Lord. Sometimes I would feel rushed and would say a quick, basically meaningless prayer to the Lord. But I have decided that it is so important to talk to Him that any time is a good time. I talk with Him as I'm getting ready to go in the mornings, while I'm driving to school, or while I am out exercising. I've also begun to include Him in all my decision making too. Sometimes it seems as though Jesus wouldn't want to be bothered by all our silly problems, but He desires to be a part of every-

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## Jesus desires to be a part of everything that goes on in our lives.

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thing that goes on in our lives. If we ask for His direction, He will give it to us. Just like the Israelites, when we do not ask for His help, we can be deceived or hurt by others.

**2. Take time every day to study the Bible.** I know I am guilty of not doing that; there's just no time! This is not a good excuse, so I have had to develop some better habits in this area, also. I know that I become too sleepy if I try to study the Bible at night before I go to bed, so I have begun getting up half an hour earlier every morning to spend time in prayer and study. It is not a lot, but it has been very helpful to me. Studying the Bible is another way we can seek the Lord's direction in our lives. He will speak to us through all the characters in the Bible. We just have to stop and take the time to hear His voice.

The Israelites "did not inquire of the Lord," and they were deceived. Should you do the same, or should you let the Lord be in control of everything in your life?

## REACT

1. What are some specific ways you can include the Lord in your everyday life?
2. To what extent is Jesus interested in your life?

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*By Kimberly Kyle, graduate student in speech pathology at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville.*

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# Consult God

## OPINION

**Key Text: Ps. 78:34-38**

This week we have been studying about what happens when we do not seek God before we make decisions. We are often taken in by Satan. What he offers seems so good that we fail to ask the Lord for guidance to make sure that we are doing the right thing. Sometimes we think we are doing well and then *bam!* We are caught!

Now we pray and tell the Lord, *not* ask the Lord, “You told me to do this . . .” But did He really? Often we have not really stopped to ask whether this was the path for us to take. Or perhaps we just assume the Lord would be pleased with our efforts. Joshua and the Israelites took for granted that the Lord wanted them to accept the Gibeonites as their allies, but had they sought the Lord they probably would have found out differently.

God is a loving God who takes care of us even when we make the wrong deci-

## Sometimes when we make a wrong decision, God can even make something good come out of it.

sion or do not consult Him before we make a decision. Sometimes when we make a wrong decision, God can even make something good come out of it. We need to learn always to seek the Lord before we make any decision. Be it little or big, we need to consult Him.

Deception always brings guilt and disgrace, thus making us slaves to the devil. One who strives to submit to God cannot and must not develop characteristics of deception. Deception was Satan’s first snare against Adam and Eve. The Gibeonites displayed the same trait that was used against our parents, Adam and Eve. Deception is Satan’s most successful weapon when one is not under the influence of God. Had Joshua consulted God, as he knew he should have, he would not have been deceived. Even though sometimes we fail to commit our ways to the Lord, God in His own merciful way overrides the deceptive plan of the enemy against His children, as He did with Joshua (Joshua 10).

How often do we, like Joshua, make decisions without consulting God? We are admonished by the wise man Solomon, “Lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight” (Prov. 3:5, 6, NIV).

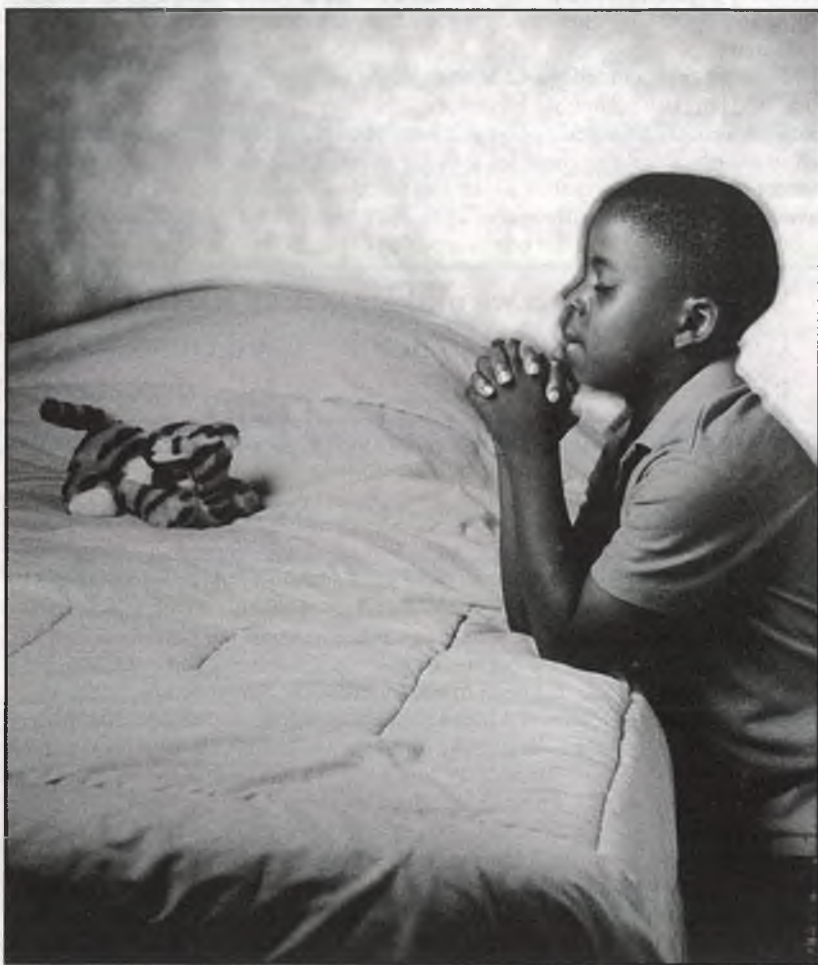
## REACT

1. What do we learn about God from the Israelites’ experience with the Gibeonites?
2. What do we learn about Christian decision making?

*By Vanessa Ruff, a senior in deaf education, University of Tennessee at Knoxville.*



# CANAAN'S CONQUEST



**“So Joshua took the entire land, just as the Lord had directed Moses, and he gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal divisions” (Josh. 11:23, NIV).**

# Canaan's Conquest Completed

## INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Ps. 32:10

“God bless our mothers and our fathers, and our teachers, and our brothers and sisters—and please take care of Yourself, God; if anything happens to You, we’re sunk!” So went the prayer of an eight-year-old boy in Columbus, Ohio.<sup>1</sup> Joshua would’ve appreciated that prayer. He knew the real Source of his nation’s victories (Josh. 10:14). Without God, Joshua and crew were sunk.

Yet a question remains. What do we tell our primary-aged supplicator when he or she reads that Joshua “totally destroyed all who breathed, just as the Lord, the God of Israel, had commanded”? (verse 40).

The guilty *and* the innocent? A discomfiting divine command. Though not totally satisfying, this, from R. C. Sproul, may help: “We have come to expect God to be merciful. From there the next step is easy: we demand it. . . . We soon forget that with our first sin we have forfeited all rights to the gift of life. That I am

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### **“Please take care of Yourself, God; if anything happens to You, we’re sunk!”**

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drawing breath this morning is an act of divine mercy.”<sup>2</sup> Grace we can live with (literally). But when God’s justice prevails, we are outraged.

Dr. Sproul tells of an encounter with a seminary professor. Then a student, Sproul had finished delivering a “practice sermon.” He had spoken of God’s infinite grace.

“‘Mr. Sproul,’ the professor said, ‘where did you ever get the idea that God’s grace is infinite? Is there absolutely no limit to His grace?’ As soon as he asked that question I knew I was in trouble. . . . God is infinite and God is gracious. We experience the grace of an infinite God, but grace is not infinite. God sets limits to His patience and forbearance.”<sup>3</sup>

This week’s study of Joshua 10–12 paints portraits of victory for some, anguish for others. But over time more details are added to the picture, and the critical truth becomes clear: Ultimately, God is for humanity, and not against us. Consider the evidence of the crucified Christ.

The praying kid was right. Without a gracious, just, and all-wise God leading us toward victory, we’d all be sunk.

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1. Adapted from *Paul Harvey’s For What It’s Worth*, edited by Paul Harvey, Jr. (New York: Bantam Books, 1991), p. 19.

2. R. C. Sproul, *The Holiness of God* (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1985), p. 164.

3. Sproul, pp. 167, 168.

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*By Randy Fishell, associate editor of Guide at the Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown, Maryland.*

## Rest at Last

### LOGOS

#### Joshua 10–12

As I read Joshua 10–12 I think, *Is this a great morality play for my benefit? Is the battle for Canaan a battle for my soul? Are the battles that Joshua fights a model for me of how to fight—and how not to fight—the spiritual battles of my daily life?*

Three words in this week's study seem to jump off the pages of Scripture at me: *fear* (Josh. 10:8); *fight* (verse 42); and *rest* (11:23). Let's see how these words relate to faith or to a word that I like better much better, *trust*.

#### No More Fear

*"Do not be afraid . . . I have already given you the victory"* (Josh. 10:8, TEV).

*Fearful* is the word to describe Israel 40 years earlier when God turned them back from Canaan's borders. Forty years later, after the decisive victory at Jericho, the words are *self-confident* and *self-reliant*, which equally unfitted them for battle.

Now as Israel's army marches to relieve the defenders of Gibeon under siege by five powerful Ammonite kings, which is it, fear or self-reliance? Are they learning that "everything that we achieve is the result of what you [God] do" (Isa. 26:12)? Have they heard that "perfect love [trust] drives out all fear" (1 John 4:18)? Are they learning that the "I" of heaven is watching over them: "I . . . chose you. . . I am with you! I am your God. . . I will make you strong . . . I will protect you and save you" (Isa. 41:9, 10), and "I have already given you the victory" (Josh. 10:8)?

Come to think of it, am I learning? Have I heard? Are *faith*, *love*, *trust* interchangeable synonyms that cast out fear and lead to victory in my life? In Revelation 2 and 3 we are urged to gain the victory, and 1 John 5:4 explains how: "We win the victory over the world by means of our faith [trust]." If I trust God, He will sometimes do it all as He did at Jericho, or He will help me in my efforts, as at Gibeon. If I stop trusting, perhaps He will let me fail, as at Ai. The greatest words to cast out fear shout to us down the centuries from the cross: "It is finished."

*How has God intervened to cast out fear and to give you victory in your own spiritual battles?*

#### Fighting Words

*"The Lord . . . was fighting for Israel"* (Josh. 10:42).

In our scripture this week, Joshua and Israel's army face formidable enemies. The armed forces of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, Eglon, Makkedah, Libnah, Gezer, Debin, Madon, Shimron, Achshaph, plus the combined armies of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, and Hivites. Did Joshua need help!

Who are my enemies? Well, it's usually not a battle against human warriors. No, I am fighting against "the wicked spiritual forces in the heavenly world, the rulers, authorities, and cosmic powers of this dark age" (Eph. 6:12). Do I need help or what?

To Joshua and to me, the Lord says, "Be determined and confident because



this is what the Lord is going to do” (Josh. 10:25). “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31). “God will do great things for those who trust in Him. . . . [But they must] give the Lord an opportunity to reveal His power in their behalf.”<sup>1</sup>

Are those fighting words? But wait a minute. Sure, the Lord would fight for Joshua because he had all those heroic character gifts, remember? So here are some favorite fighting words that can apply to me at my worst. “The rough, sullen, stubborn dispositions draw most heavily upon His [the Lord’s] sympathy and love. . . . The one who is most easily tempted, and is most inclined to err, is the special object of His solicitude.”<sup>2</sup> Come to think of it, these are loving words too.

*What battles stand between you and the Promised Land?*

### **A Rest for Me**

*“So the people rested from war” (Josh. 11:23).*

Joshua and the Lord blitzkrieg across Canaan. “Joshua captured all the land” (verse 16). Thirty-one battles, thirty-one kings defeated, thirty-one cities captured or destroyed. What a bloody fight. No wonder the people were ready for a rest. But wait; they weren’t just going to rest from a couple of years of war.

The rest that God describes means more than that. How about those 40 years of wandering in the wilderness? Didn’t they need a rest from that? Or how about

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## **Abraham and his descendants hadn’t had a place to call home since he and Sarah had pulled up stakes in Ur about 1900 B.C.**

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the 400 years of slavery that they had suffered? That deserved a rest. And remember this: Abraham and his descendants hadn’t had a place to call home since he and Sarah had pulled up stakes in Ur about 1900 B.C. They were “strangers in a foreign land” (Gen. 15:13). Surely these people deserved a rest, not just rest from fighting (Josh. 11:23), but peace (21:24), security (Ruth 3:1), and a home (1:9). It’s *home* that the Lord wanted to give to His people Israel and to His people today—a *home* and *peace* and *security* and *rest* forever. No more fear. No more fighting. No more slavery. No more wandering in the wilderness of sin. “God has offered us the promise that we may receive that rest he spoke about [go home]” (Heb. 4:1).

And there is still more. It’s not all future. It can begin in part right now. We can have a sample of what it means to enter into God’s rest (home) today. “There still remains for God’s people a rest [home] like God’s resting on the seventh day. For whoever receives that rest which God promised will rest from his own work, just as God rested from his” (Heb. 4:9, 10).

*How can the Sabbath be part of the home that God has in mind for you?*

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1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 493.

2. *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 179.

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*By Alan Forquer, assistant foreman of desktop publishing, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown, Maryland.*

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## Ganging Up on God

### TESTIMONY

Key Text: Josh. 10:25

Today, there seems to be a whole new consciousness about physical power. Everyone wants it. Hence the use of steroids, dietary supplements, and high-protein shakes abounds. Health clubs are on the upswing, featuring high-tech workouts, using high-tech equipment in far from Spartanlike surroundings. Professional athletes command huge salaries with near godlike status. Times change but human nature does not. The lust for earthly power was alive and well in the days of Joshua.

“The victory at Beth-horon was speedily followed by the conquest of southern Canaan. ‘Joshua smote all the country of the hills, and of the south, and of the vale. . . . And all these kings and their land did Joshua take at one time, because the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel. And Joshua returned, and all Israel with him, unto the camp at Gilgal.’

“The tribes of northern Palestine, terrified at the success which had attended the armies of Israel, now entered into a league against them. At the head of this

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### The lust for earthly power was alive and well in the days of Joshua.

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confederacy was Jabin, king of Hazor, a territory to the west of Lake Merom. ‘And they went out, they and all their hosts with them.’ This army was much larger than any that the Israelites had before encountered in Canaan—‘much people, even as the sand that is upon the seashore in multitude, with horses and chariots very many. And when all these kings were met together, they came and pitched together at the waters of Merom, to fight against Israel.’ Again a message of encouragement was given to Joshua: ‘Be not afraid because of them: for tomorrow about this time will I deliver them up all slain before Israel.’

“Near Lake Merom he fell upon the camp of the allies and utterly routed their forces. ‘The Lord delivered them into the hand of Israel, who smote them, and chased them . . . until they left them none remaining.’ The chariots and horses that had been the pride and boast of the Canaanites were not to be appropriated by Israel. At the command of God the chariots were burned, and the horses lamed, and thus rendered unfit for use in battle. The Israelites were not to put their trust in chariots or horses, but ‘in the name of the Lord their God.’”<sup>1</sup>

Much too often in the experience of modern-day spiritual Israelites, we tend to rely on our own horses and chariots. Let us ally ourselves with the true Source of power, that through His grace we will reflect His beauty.

“The secret of success is the union of divine power with human effort.”<sup>2</sup>

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1. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 510.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 509.

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*By David K. Latta, pressman, the Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown, Maryland.*

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# God Is a Winner

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Josh. 10:42**

I've often heard "It's not whether you win or lose, it's how you play the game."

When reading these three chapters, Joshua 10–12, two things jump out over and over again. First of all, Joshua did what God commanded, as is evidenced in Joshua 10:40 and 11:15. Second, and most obvious of all, is the fact that Joshua didn't win a single battle. *Never!* Joshua 10:11, 14, 19, 25, 30, 32, 42, and 11:6, 8 make it blatantly clear that God did the winning.

And He was apparently anxious to make sure Joshua himself knew where the victory came from. "Joshua was fully aware of the limitations imposed on him by the Israelites' inferiority in armament and training for set battle. Consequently, he based his tactics in battles . . . on the Israelites' qualities of speed, stealth and knowledge of the terrain."\*

But here Joshua goes to battle, and when the trumpets blow and the people shout, the walls of Jericho fall. Some modern-day physicists may theorize that

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## Winning isn't dependent on how *you* play the game.

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somehow all this noise caused a sort of resonance with the walls, causing them to crack and fall. But the Bible is clear: the victory came from God (6:16). Or consider when Joshua asked God to hold the sun still so he could finish winning the battle (10:12, 13). God did it! Historians would like to pass this off as a fable that couldn't possibly be true, because it would destroy creation. But the Creator controls creation. It seems, in general, nearly every theologian claims that the sun standing still was some sort of solar eclipse, which frightened the Israelites and became exaggerated in length. To all those educated theologians—and I'm definitely not included—Joshua 10:12, 13 clearly indicates that both the sun *and* moon stood still, as nearly as I can figure (geographically), on opposite horizons. Indeed, God wanted Joshua to know where the victory came from.

When you're on God's side, following His commands, winning isn't dependent on how *you* play the game. No one would have strategized the way to win the battle at Jericho was to blow the trumpets and shout. And it wasn't. It depended solely on how well Joshua knew and obeyed his Commander.

## REACT

1. In what aspects of your life is it apparent that God is fighting for you?
2. Why was God's instruction to destroy the cities of Palestine totally?

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\*Chaim Herzog and Mordechai Gichon, *Battles of the Bible* (New York: Random House, 1978), p. 45.

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*By Stewart Pepper, bindery machine operator, the Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown, Maryland.*



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## Three Confidences

### HOW-TO

**Key Text:** Josh. 10:12-14

My heroes have always been confident. Although confidence is not one of the criteria for being asked to serve in God's master plan, God does appreciate and respect confidence. Consider, for example, Jonah, Gideon, and Thomas.

Joshua, a true hero, was, in a word, confident. He was confident in God's abilities. He was confident in his own relationship with God. He was confident in himself. Joshua based his confidence in God's abilities upon his own past experiences. Having been an aide to Moses, he had witnessed the awesome power of God many times. And with generations of faith-building stories passed on around the evening fire, he had no question about God's omnipotence.

Having confidence in your own relationship with God is a little tougher. Being confident in any relationship requires time and communication. Joshua knew that he was where God wanted him to be and that he was doing what God wanted him to do. With confidence in God's ability to do so, Joshua commanded the sun and

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### **Being confident in any relationship requires time and communication.**

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the moon to stand still "in the presence of Israel" (Josh. 10:12, NIV). No negotiations, as with Gideon, no doubts as to political repercussions, as in Jonah's case. Joshua had absolute confidence in his relationship with God. "There has never been a day like it before or since, a day when the Lord listened to a man" (verse 14). The apostle Paul had this same confidence when he wrote, "Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day" (2 Tim. 4:8). No doubts.

Probably the toughest confidence to keep in balance is self-confidence. Too much or too little makes it tough (not impossible) for God to work out His plan through us. In most cases a lack of confidence in oneself reflects lack of confidence in God's ability and in one's relationship with Him. In the other extreme—too much self-confidence—the tendency is to lose a sense of need for God, since we think we have everything in control. King David had to be continually reminded that God was in control. Very few people have gained a balance in their self-confidence. Joshua was one of these individuals. Joshua kept his self-confidence in check by continually surrendering himself to God. When we surrender to God, we can surrender to no one else. This was Joshua's strategy and his foundation for self-confidence.

Joshua was in all ways a hero. He was a leader of people and a follower of God. With confidence in God's ability, confidence in his relationship with God, and a balanced self-confidence, Joshua led the people into the Promised Land. Lord, help me to be confident.

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*By Dan Wegh, inventory-control coordinator, the Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown, Maryland.*

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# The Ultimate Battle

## OPINION

**Key Text: Eph. 6:13-18**

I can't wait for the day when we will be able to "rest from war." As Christians we are engaged daily in some type of war—combating the drug problem in our neighborhoods; stopping the violence plaguing our societies; promoting love and acceptance of all people regardless of race, color, or nationality; saving the environment. Young people today have so many things to deal with that it is easy to become discouraged, throw up their hands in disgust, give up completely. I know what it is like; I've done it a few times myself.

Sometimes I imagine Joshua wanted to give up too. He had all sorts of problems surrounding him, except they came in the form of men armed for battle. But look past the mighty armies of the Amorites, Hebron, Jerusalem, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon, and see their underlying power—Satan. The enemy causing Joshua's battles is the same one causing the chaos in our lives! He's on a mission to discourage us and point out our weaknesses and inability to fight this battle alone. As Paul adequately explains, "We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against

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### **This fight is for keeps, life or death, a daily fight to the finish.**

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principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age" (Eph. 6:12, NKJV).

Basically, this whole battle is between God and Satan. This fight is for keeps, life or death, a daily fight to the finish. When we chose Christ as our personal Saviour, we enlisted in His army, so Satan is targeting us for defeat by any means necessary. Are you ready for combat? Only you can answer that for yourself, but the tools are available to prepare you if you look for them.

Ephesians 6:13-17 is our supply checklist for this battle: truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and salvation. We have all we need, including the ultimate weapon needed to beat Satan once and for all—God's Word, the Bible. Thank God for giving us the foolproof battle plan!

After putting on our armor, all we need to do is stand firm in the realization that as long as we have the proper protection, are armed with His Word, and stay in constant communication with our Commander-in-Chief through prayer, the victory is ours to claim. Our daily battles may sometimes take us down, but definitely not out, because we can fight back with the assurance that one day we will rest, knowing that it was all worth it.

## **REACT**

1. What is the relationship, if any, between obedience to God and success?
2. In what everyday ways do you identify with Joshua?

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*By Debra A. McKinney, editorial secretary for Message magazine, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown, Maryland.*

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# IT'S IN THE WILL



**“Now give me this hill country that the Lord promised me that day. You yourself heard then that the Anakites were there and their cities were large and fortified, but, the Lord helping me, I will drive them out just as he said” (Josh. 14:12, NIV).**



## “The Pain Then . . .”

### INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Josh. 13:1

“When Joshua was old and well advanced in years, the Lord said to him, ‘You are very old, and there are still very large areas of land to be taken over’ (Josh. 13:1, NIV). So Joshua divides the land, following the instruction of God and Moses or, in its absence, an impartial lottery. He gives to Caleb and the daughters of Zelophehad what they had been promised by a higher authority (14:6-13; 17:3, 4) and refuses to adjust what that authority had designated for the tribes of Joseph (verses 14-18).

On a much removed stage, an aged King Lear expresses his “fast intent to shake all cares and business from our age, conferring them on younger strengths, while we unburdened crawl toward death.” Lear divides his kingdom on a whim, determining his daughters’ inheritances according to their professed love for him. A tragedy is initiated, and the daughter whose true affection finds no expression is banished, while her two indifferent-but-eloquent sisters are rewarded.

Two kingdoms divided, one amicably, the other with bloodshed. The one by a

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### **Lear determines his daughters’ inheritances according to their professed love for him.**

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man following a prescribed and impartial formula with the humility of delegated authority. The other by a king making a whimsical and arbitrary display of power.

An inheritance is a kind of promise, something that we feel to be our due. Yet we can never be totally certain of it. After all, the dying tycoon can be as vindictive and capricious as he wishes.

What are the qualities of a promise that make us confident to claim it? Unlike the assumed right to an inheritance, it has to be explicit, unambiguous. The conditions should be attainable; what would be the use of an insurance policy with so many qualifications that you could never claim on it?

But not all promises meet these criteria. Should we, for example, accept an “I love you” only if it translates “I will *always* love you”? On the one hand, yes; why become vulnerable to a passing infatuation? On the other, no; “the pain then is only a part of the joy now” (from the movie-biography of C. S. Lewis, *Shadowlands*). The promise we can be least confident in claiming is the most rewarding to accept.

We often assume that all God’s promises are like those made to the tribes of Israel; explicit and unequivocal. “Ask and it shall be given unto you” does sound remarkably open. However, when faced with “unanswered” prayers, we can only assume that the promises were qualified after all. Where do we gain the certainty to claim God’s promises then? Perhaps we don’t. Perhaps we have to remain a little uncertain, but, like accepting a declaration of love, claim the promise because it is something we want, regardless.

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By Elizabeth Hammond, law student, University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia.

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## Dividing the Inheritance

### LOGOS

#### Joshua 13–17

##### Israel's Dependency (Josh. 13:6, 7).

Here at the beginning of the division of the land, it is clear that God is *giving* the land to Israel. He will “drive out” its inhabitants. He will effectively *give* the land to the Israelites. This comes after extended descriptions in earlier books of the homeless wanderings of the nation. Israel had no natural claim to any land. The only land they possessed was solely a product of God's election of them and His promise to Abraham. Deuteronomy, in particular, makes this clear (7:7; 8:17; 9:5). Israel is totally dependent on God for a home.

God's assurance that He will drive out Canaan's inhabitants sits interestingly alongside passages such as Joshua 13:13; 15:63; 16:10; 17:12, 18, which declare that Israel failed to drive out certain tribes. By contrast, Caleb is described as driving out three “descendants of Anak” (15:14, NIV). That all sounds like a contradiction. On the one hand, God says He'll do it, while these passages attribute the specified failures and successes to Israel and Caleb, respectively. Perhaps resolution is given by Caleb's statement of faith in 14:12. This passage suggests a metaphor for the way God's promises are fulfilled—human cooperation with divine initiatives.

##### God's Dependability (Josh. 1:6, 9).

God had promised land. Israel had not always been interested, as their wilderness complaints and rebellion attest, and still God had patiently waited for the appropriate time to fulfil His promise. In fact, every time the farmer placed his basket of produce before the altar, he was told to make the declaration recorded in Deuteronomy 26:5-10. The land God had been faithful in giving to Israel now faithfully sustained them. This passage in Deuteronomy allowed the Israelites to recount an impressive history of God's activity on their behalf. This beneficence was most recently demonstrated by the produce of the land. Here was concrete and recent evidence of God's dependability!

##### Proof of a Relationship Between God and Israel (Josh. 13:6-8, 15, 23, 24, 29, 32; 14:1-3, 9, 14; 15:20; 16:4, 5, 8, 9; 17:4, 6, 14).

They knew they were the people of God because He had given them this land as an *inheritance*. This description of the land recurs frequently in chapters 13–17 (as we've seen) and suggests a relationship of sonship between Israel and God. Israel had inherited the land, not because of its greatness or valor, but because of its relationship with God.

It doesn't require too much genius to recognize some sort of metaphor for the gospel here. The heavenly Canaan is not earned by performance but inherited by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8). Or as Romans 8:16, 17; Galatians 3:26-29; and Ephesians 1:11 put it, in Christ we obtain the inheritance by being children of God and thus heirs—joint heirs with Christ.

Here in Joshua, just as with the heavenly Canaan for God's people now, God Himself guaranteed the right to the inheritance, but the promise was yet to be realized. There's that already-but-not-yet tension evident.



**Individual Property Rights (Josh. 13:8, 15, 24, 29; 14:2; 15:1, 20; 16:1, 5; 17:1).**

The land was divided within each tribe “according to their families” (13:15, KJV). Every household was to have a part in the national inheritance. Each individual household could claim that its right to the land it held was guaranteed by God Himself.

This sense of an individual part in the national inheritance is powerfully demonstrated in Naboth’s reaction to King Ahab’s suggestion that he should exchange or buy other land for Naboth’s vineyard, “The Lord forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers” (1 Kings 21:3, NIV). Naboth held the land in trust from the Lord for the benefit of his family. It was not his to sell or exchange. It’s significant that the only way Ahab could get the vineyard was by falsely convicting Naboth of blasphemy, a sin that would disqualify Naboth from being a part of God’s people. Naboth was then stoned, and his land was taken (verses 11-16).

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## **Every household was to have a part in the national inheritance.**

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Clearly, possessing land and being a part of God’s covenant community were closely connected.

This connection between possession of inherited land and being a part of God’s covenant community might be what fired up the prophets over economic exploitation. Elijah certainly responded rapidly to Naboth’s stoning (verses 17-22). More and more people were deprived of their ancestral land and driven into a state of serfdom on land that was once their own. This was done through debt bondage and other means at the hand of the wealthy few. The prophets rose to the people’s defense with angry indignation (Micah 2:1-5; Isa. 5:8). Losing one’s land was more than a financial disaster; it struck at the very basis of the individual’s covenant relationship with God.

As David Suzuki said, to many of us land is “a two-dimensional physical surface (if we exclude a third dimension, which grants rights of access to urban high-rises above or to mineral or water rights below) to be surveyed, subdivided, and zoned. It is a commodity—valuable but no more ‘sacred’ than a stack of cedar logs, a heap of coal, or any other economic resource. It is a financial investment—to be bought, ‘developed,’ and resold (hopefully at a handsome profit) by shuffling official titles and deeds.”\* To Israel, it was much more.

### **REACT**

1. What inheritance have you received from God? What have you done with it?
2. How was the inheritance of the Levites different from that of the other tribes? Why did God make this difference?

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\* Peter Knudston and David Suzuki, *Wisdom of the Elders* (Allen & Unwin: Sydney, 1992), p. 212.



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## Caleb's Can-Do Attitude

### TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Josh. 14:6-14**

Caleb may never have been on Nike's payroll, but he would have been snapped up by them had he lived in our era. Caleb would not necessarily be your slam-dunking basketballer or your hot tennis ace who sold shoes in his spare time. But Nike would be hard pressed to find someone who lived up to the slogan "Just do it" better than Caleb.

Twice in the Bible he is shown as being a man of action with a can-do attitude. The first time was when Moses sent out the 12 spies and Caleb, and Joshua alone gave favorable reports. The second time was when Caleb, in asking for his tribe's inheritance, gladly chose the heavily defended Anakim region. He wasn't timid.

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### **He wasn't timid. Nor did he worry about failing.**

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Nor did he worry about failing. His attitude was, "If God will be with me, then I'll succeed. Caleb lived up to the Nike slogan. And he did it best when he trusted in God.

Ellen White says, "It was Caleb's faith in God that gave him courage."\* Caleb believed God would fill his insufficiencies as he removed the Anakim from Hebron. God was true and rewarded Caleb's faith. I'm sure God is more than willing for us to have the same attitude as Caleb.

We, too, face problems and challenges in our lives. If we follow Caleb's lead and say, "Yes, I can—with God's help," then God will be there for us.

### **REACT**

1. What is the difference between Caleb's can-do attitude and presumption?
2. How confident are you that God is filling your insufficiencies?
3. What is the connection between faith in God and courage?

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\* *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 378.

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*By Joel Butler, a medical student at the University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia.*

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## Oppressed or Oppressors?

### EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Josh. 14:12**

Today, hundreds of thousands of displaced people roam the earth, refugees who have no land for their displaced nation. In the postcolonial era, the land is exposed as an ever-increasing symbol of identity, a physical expression of character.

While Palestine and Israel strive to negotiate peaceful divisions of land, people continue to die in the former Yugoslavia as territory is claimed and counter-claimed. Close links develop between an ethnic group and their land, as it provides a geographical focal point for a nation and its future. Today, land disputes continue on every continent as ethnic groups and social communities attempt to redetermine their national heritage. What has this precedent of world division established? What has it gained for the people God created? For some it has gained a momentary victory, a possession, a jewel for the crown, or a state for the flag. It has gained colonial colors on a map or a misguided sense of racial, religious, or ideological

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### Were they not, in turn, becoming the oppressors of another people?

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superiority. But in terms of people it has gained bloodshed and death, it has gained oppression, and it has become the goal for whole communities. Thus the inheritance becomes a vicious cycle of social and personal anger.

Despite Iraqi territorial claims, the British established an independent Kuwait in 1899. When Iraq invaded in 1991, the world was shocked—but why? What form of inheritance did an imperially established boundary provide for a Middle Eastern culture? It was an inheritance that amassed the cultural anger of a people; it was one that had not been sanctioned by *their* God! Since the end of World War II, close to a hundred new nation states have emerged worldwide, and as each claims its independence, the world watches. The façade of peace-treaty divisions crumbles to reveal the cultural incapacity of boundaries that dispossess the indigenous of their land.

For 40 years the tribes of Israel were a displaced people. Traveling like nomads, generations had grown old and died. Others had been born and had grown up lacking a geographical focal point to provide them with a physical sense of belonging, a place they could call home. The Israelites had learned many lessons as they journeyed away from their own cruel oppressors—the Egyptians. Caleb now longed to settle into the land God had given them. But were they not, in turn, becoming the oppressors of another people, the victorious winners of another's home, the usurpers of someone else's heritage?

To travel is an enlightening experience—it teaches and expands one's vision. To come home is not a matter of conquest; it is a matter of knowing one already belongs.

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*By Suzanne Milne, a fourth-year literature-and-politics major at Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia.*

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# Taking on Twentieth-Century Giants

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: Josh. 14:12**

What do you think of when you hear the name *Caleb*? His faith and courage are first to my mind. After suffering the disappointment of a delayed attack on Canaan, he was not content to sit back and live in the security of a valley filled with fellow Israelites; he wanted to achieve more. Caleb wanted the challenge of defeating the Anakim by the power of God.

As Christians surrounded by a world becoming less and less Christlike, we have some idea of how the Israelites must have felt entering Canaan, and we could easily excuse Caleb if he decided to avoid further confrontation by settling down in the valley. The fact that he didn't is incentive for us to look deeper into our own reactions to non-Christian peoples and philosophies.

If we learn from Caleb's example, we should consider how we can reach beyond our safe Seventh-day Adventist community and go out to face the challenge of associating more freely with both other Christians and non-Christians. We may accept this challenge by choosing to attend a non-Adventist college or university,

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## People should be encouraged to increase their secular association.

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work in a non-Adventist company, and/or join non-Adventist sporting, cultural, and political groups.

The greatest thing about a challenge is the risk. Like Caleb, we cannot always be certain as to what God wants us to do, so we must step out in faith, knowing that if "the Lord be with me," then so is the victory. If we fail, then we are challenged to search elsewhere.

Why was Caleb so eager to confront the enemy? He had the preparation and experience of 85 years. He had already seen the potential of the land (Numbers 13, 14) and knew the true power of God.

People should be encouraged to increase their secular association. They are stepping out of the valley and taking on giants. These activities should be seen as expanding the church rather than abandoning it.

Our challenge to help save the Anakim may indeed be more difficult than it was to destroy them. But either way, success depends on our relationship with God and our support of one another. It is important that we have a vision of what can be achieved through God's power and our personal preparation.

## REACT

1. What do you see as the dangers and rewards of Caleb's approach?
2. Was it easier for Caleb to destroy the Anakim than it is for us to associate with non-Christians? Explain your answer.

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*By Andrew Perry, a law student at Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia.*

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# When Is Faith a Crime?

## OPINION

**Key Text: Josh. 14:12**

It was early morning in Al Ahmadi, Kuwait. The marketplace was yawning as it awoke to the sound of softly chanted prayers rising from the nearby mosque. The day was still cool, and the children played happily in the square as stall keepers laid out their produce for trade. An old man sat in the corner of the square, eating filthy scraps of food that he had collected during the night. He liked to sit there unnoticed, basking in the morning sunshine. It made him feel young again as he watched the older children playing and the younger children clinging shyly to their mothers.

When the shell exploded, he had no time for shock. He was killed instantly. But I watched the news that night. I had time for shock. Torn and crumpled bodies lay on red earth, and scraps of flesh hung from shredded awnings.

It was macabre, and the world was angry. The United Nations rejected Iraqi

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## **If this story were not in the Bible, it would be called genocide.**

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claims based on territory and religion, and nation after nation pledged military assistance to prevent further human-rights violations in Kuwait.

The story in Joshua is similar. Israel invaded Canaan, slaughtered the inhabitants, and divided the land. Yet we do not usually find this shocking or horrific. Instead, we hold up Caleb and Joshua as examples on which to model our faith. When Caleb asked Joshua for the mountain country inhabited by the Anakim giants, he said, "It may be that the Lord will be with me, and I shall be able to drive them out as the Lord said" (Josh. 14:12, NKJV). Caleb did not spell out his intention, but it was clearly to slaughter the Anakim giants and take possession of their land. If this story were not in the Bible, it would be called genocide. So what makes it an example of great faith? Is it the fact that Caleb spoke in the name of God?

I don't think so. Many military leaders throughout history have spoken in the name of God, but many of them were defeated. Surely some of the losers had as much faith as the winners, and if faith were the only relevant factor, God would be inconsistent and even capricious. But maybe faith was not the only relevant factor, and there were other considerations beyond our understanding. Or maybe faith did not enter the equation at all. Maybe the only relevant factor was military power. What do you think?

## **REACT**

1. Do you think all the Bible stories can be used to illustrate or clarify an aspect of modern, practical Christianity? Explain your answer.

2. Explain why you agree or disagree that God is always on the winning side.

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*By Andrew Cox, a merchant banker in Sydney, Australia.*

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# DIVIDING THE INHERITANCE



**“Not one of all the Lord’s good promises to the house of Israel failed; every one was fulfilled” (Josh. 21:45, NIV).**

# Valley of the Hammocks

## INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Josh. 18:3

In my native country of El Salvador is a place called Valley of the Hammocks, in which the ground sways softly but frequently. People there are accustomed to living with tremors. The continual shaking of the ground makes it quite impossible to maintain the wells that the natives dig in their houses. Sooner or later, the earthquakes break each well, making it almost impossible to have water for their daily needs. In addition to these problems, volcanic lava covers the land, making the growing of plants nearly impossible. Even during rare instances when the shaking is most subdued, the movement will slowly but surely open up crevices inside the wells, and the water will run out.

Most of the time, when the devil comes to shake up our ground, his shaking is not very violent; however, slowly but surely, he causes great damage in our lives. The Israelites saw the great and wonderful things God did at the Red Sea. They saw the rock spew forth water and the column of fire that guided them through the night.

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## **Joshua accused the Israelites of being negligent and lethargic.**

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These things really represented the broken cisterns that Jeremiah was talking about when he said, "My people have committed two sins: they have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water" (Jer. 2:13, NIV).

Even though they were eyewitnesses of God's marvels during their journey in the desert, they could not hold God's blessings in their hearts. Satan always came to shake up their ground, ground that was easily broken. Thus they started to complain against God.

At the end of their journey, Joshua began the process of distributing the land. Seven tribes had still not received their lands. Worse, they failed to show any interest in the matter. They were so fascinated with all the new things the land of Canaan provided that they didn't care for anything else. Joshua said, "How long will you wait before you begin to take possession of the land that the Lord, the God of your fathers, has given you?" (Josh. 18:3). He accused the Israelites of being negligent and lethargic. They could have had much more but were comfortable with so little.

Perhaps it will be the case with us today. Satan jolts our foundations, and we convert into broken cisterns, broken in such magnitude that we cannot retain the blessings that God grants to us. We become so comfortable with our current situation that we do not desire to progress to the highest spiritual level or the holy vocation God has ordained that we attain. Will we continue to be negligent in claiming every one of the blessings God has for us?

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*By Jose Flores, an inmate at the California Medical Facility, Vacaville, California.*

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# God Is Not Fair

## LOGOS

### Josh. 18:6

Last week we saw how Joshua divided the land on the eastern side of the Jordan River. Two tribes asked for this portion, so Joshua agreed on the condition that they remain with their fellow tribes until all the inheritance was secure. He then proceeded to give the head of each clan an apportionment as he saw fit. At the conclusion of Joshua 17, the tribes of Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh) returned to Joshua, asking for more land and claiming that the divisions were not properly determined.

This week we see a different approach to the division of the land. Joshua sends out a work force of cartographers to survey and map the land, dividing it by agreement among the claimants. He states that the apportionments would be made by lottery. He goes even further by having the tribes select their own cartographers to be part of the work force. He seems to be leaving them with no reason to complain when they finally receive their inheritance.

Our modern, comfortable way of thinking is steeped in the belief that everyone is equal and has inalienable rights. We could easily fall into a trap of believing that Joshua blew it the first time around. He then learned his lesson and acted in a much fairer and godly manner for the final division of the land. I propose this is not necessarily so.

After all, God was leading and providing, not Joshua. He had told the Israelites, "I will give you an inheritance." It was He who directed Joshua to divide the land east of the Jordan River. It was He to whom Ephraim and Manasseh complained. It was also He who now determined this new way of dividing the remaining land.

Did God become fair only after the people complained? Or is something else happening? Is God fair?

The dictionary meanings of *fair* include "beautiful," "mild," "impartial," "conforming," and "sufficient." We like to believe we are talking about impartiality when we cry, "It's not fair!" If we are honest with ourselves, though, what we are really saying is, "It's not enough!" When we get right down to it, our concepts of fairness are rooted in selfishness.

The only being in the universe who claims to be fair is Satan. He insinuated that God is not fair to keep knowledge of good and evil to Himself (Gen. 3:4, 5).

"Satan's principle is self-serving. This principle he attributed to God, misrepresenting His character to the world. And he led man to accept the principle of selfishness. He caused him to believe that by serving himself he would find happiness. By the Son of God this principle was to be demonstrated as false. By Him the Father was to be rightly represented. The ideal of true ministry God committed to His Son, and bade Him work it out in humanity." God describes Himself as just, merciful, gracious, longsuffering, and kind. He never calls Himself fair.

Satan again insinuates that God is unfair in the story of Job (Job 1:10, 11). When God does what Satan asks, presumably, this makes God fair. Then God describes what He has done. "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And

he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason" (2:3, NIV). This is the essence of fairness.

Jesus tells the story about the kingdom of God. A man hired workers to bring in the harvest. At noon he hired more workers. Just before evening, anxious to get the harvest complete before nightfall, he hired still more workers. At the end of the day, when the workers presented themselves to collect their wages, he paid each for a full day's work. The ones who had worked all day (and received a proper one-day's wage) were the ones who cried, "Unfair!"

What are we to make of Joshua 18 and the division of the land? Is it possible that the people rejected God's first, best plan? What might that plan have been? Was it to give to each family the inheritance that they would use best?

The Israelites were acting childishly. It reminds me of a time when my sister and I quarreled over the last piece of pie. Mother could easily have divided it between us, but we didn't trust each other, and I guess we didn't trust her, either.

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## **When we cry, "It's not fair!" what we are really saying is, "It's not enough!"**

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So, with a shrug, she handed the knife to me and said, "You get to cut it; your sister gets to choose the first piece."

After all God had done for them, they still didn't trust Him. It's as though they were saying, "Let us map and measure the land. We can do a better job of dividing it up ourselves."

How about us today? Are we so busy making sure we have an equal piece of the pie that we forget to trust God? As we continue to study Joshua, let's keep the example of Caleb before us instead of the example of the cartographers of Israel!

### **REACT**

1. From God's viewpoint, what is the difference, if any, between fairness and justice?
2. Explain why you agree or disagree that God is not fair.
3. How do "equality" and "inalienable rights" relate to God's system of justice?

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\* *The Love of God How Manifested*, p. 17.

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*By Bruce Younggreen, volunteer chaplain at the California Medical Facility, Vacaville, and computer consultant for the Department of the Navy, Mare Island Naval Shipyard, Vallejo, California.*

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# From Canaan to Prison

## TESTIMONY

### Key Text: Deuteronomy 28

One of the most interesting aspects of prison life is watching the choices people make as they find themselves essentially at the lowest point in their lives. Some make active choices to continue in the sin that brought them to prison in the first place; others look for ways to change their lives. Among those looking for a change are those who turn to God. Some turn to God hoping to strike up some sort of deal whereby if they do something, or if they can trick God into thinking that they will do something, God will grant their petitions.

A very few, however, see the gross error of their ways and come to the Lord sincerely. In these people we see the miraculous workings of the Lord and the faithfulness of His promises. This is the same power and these are the same blessings

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## In these people we see the miraculous workings of the Lord and the faithfulness of His promises.

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offered and given to the Israelites under Moses and Joshua. Because this distinction is so clear, so visible, and God is glorified in these people, Ellen White wrote the following:

“There are many whose hearts are aching under a load of care because they seek to reach the world’s standard. They have chosen its service, accepted its perplexities, adopted its customs. Thus their character is marred and their life made a weariness. In order to gratify ambition and worldly desires, they wound the conscience and bring upon themselves an additional burden of remorse. The continual worry is wearing out the life forces. Our Lord desires them to lay aside this yoke of bondage. He invites them to accept His yoke; He says, ‘My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.’ He bids them seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and His promise is that all things needful to them for this life shall be added. Worry is blind, and cannot discern the future; but Jesus sees the end from the beginning. In every difficulty He has His way prepared to bring relief. Our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us, of which we know nothing. Those who accept the one principle of making the service and honor of God supreme will find perplexities vanish, and a plain path before their feet.”\*

## REACT

1. What was the lowest point in your life, and how did it affect your relationship with Christ?
2. In everyday terms, what does it mean to seek first the kingdom of God?
3. What should a Christian’s attitude be toward life’s difficulties?

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\* *My Life Today*, p. 181.



## Scared Stiff!

### EVIDENCE

**Key Text:** Josh. 21:45; 2 Pet. 1:4; 2 Cor. 1:20

The book of Joshua is a powerful keystone of testimony to the faithfulness of God throughout history. Although archaeological evidence concerning Jericho and Ai is controversial, letters recovered from Palestine dating back to the first half of the fourteenth century B.C. seem to support the biblical account very nicely.

The book of Joshua is replete with battles and conquests waged by the Israelites against the people of Canaan. Moreover, these battles took on a supernatural context, and their fame appears to have spread throughout the land. The Bible is silent concerning the conquest of central Canaan. Armarna letter No. 289 appears to refer to the surrender of Shechem and was written by the king of Jerusalem to Pharaoh. In it he complains that the Habiru (Hebrews) had become so strong that he and other kings who still withstood them may have to surrender to them, even as Shechem had surrendered.

The letters of Abdu-Kheba, the king of Jerusalem, to Pharaoh give us a clearer

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### These very same promises apply to us in Christ today.

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indication of the Israelites' power. In the letters the king complains bitterly that the king of Egypt was turning a deaf ear to his petitions for help. Letter 271 states, "Let the king, my Lord, protect his land from the hand of the Habiru, and if not, then let the king, my Lord, send chariots to fetch us, lest our servants smite us." In letter 286 he complains, "Why do you like the Habiru, and dislike the [faithful] governors?" In the same letter he warned, the "Habiru plunder all the lands of the king. If there are archers [sent to assist him in his fight] in this year the lands of the king, my Lord, will remain [intact], but if there are [sent] no archers, the lands of the king, my Lord, will be lost."

Evidence points to the Lord's faithfulness in fulfilling His promise to "set thee on high above all nations of the earth: . . . The Lord shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways. . . . And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord; and they shall be afraid of thee" (Deut. 28:1-10). These very same promises apply to us in Christ *today*.

### REACT

1. What evidence in history strengthens your faith in God's promises as they apply to you today?
2. What kind of evidence is available today to allow us to confirm the choices we make in our spiritual walk?

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\* *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, pp. 43, 44.

By Craig Roberts, an inmate at the California Medical Facility, Vacaville, California.

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## Go and Receive!

### HOW-TO

**Key Text:** Hos. 4:6; Prov. 3:5, 6; Deut. 8:2, 3

Are we content to settle for our “fair share”? How *do* we shake off our lethargy and move to take our inheritance? Paul pleads, “Covet earnestly the best gifts” (1 Cor. 12:31). He continues, “As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (2:9). He gave this promise, not just to be received at some time in the future, but to be received *now*.

It is written that “the just shall live by faith” (Heb. 10:38). Faith is the key to the ultimate power of the kingdom. Most know that it is important to believe. The problem is that many don’t know just *how* to believe.

Some feel that because we are transformed bit by bit into the image of Christ, God fulfills His promises in the same way. This is not always true. When we receive Christ, we receive the fulfillment of God’s promises right there and then.

When God made His covenant with Abram, He stated, “Neither shall thy name

### How do we shake off our lethargy and move to take our inheritance?

any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee” (Gen. 17:5). Here was a childless old man who claimed the promise right there and then.”

Romans 12:2 states, “Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” To have the holy boldness of Abraham, we must stop thinking as the world thinks.

The Bible gives specific commandments as to how we are to think and why: “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Phil. 4:8). We must reject all negative thoughts and accept only that which is true and positive.

What we believe and what we think upon are very important. God the Almighty through Jesus Christ His Son “could there do no mighty work” (Mark 6:5) because the people refused to believe the truth. God honors our choices of belief. Do you believe you receive His promises in accordance with His Word right now?

### REACT

1. Do you analyze your thoughts and compare them with the Word of God in truth and in Spirit?
2. What kind of training and discipline was Paul talking about in 1 Corinthians 9:26, 27?

*By Craig Roberts, an inmate at the California Medical Facility, Vacaville, California.*

# In the Long Run

## OPINION

**Key Text: Josh. 21:45**

God's master plan for Israel unfolds in the book of Joshua through the miraculous completion of His promises to their forefathers (right down to the last detail). As we study, we see a parallel path we are to take.

In my junior year in academy, two of my teachers always used the expression "in the long run" when discussing decisions that would affect me in the future. I became irritated at the cliché because so much importance was placed on the overall plan. I wanted to see immediate results. That kind of impatience was the downfall of the stiff-necked children of Israel. I never dreamed I might qualify as "stiff-necked" or produce hurt lives, utter chaos, and delays in God's work for me. Sound familiar? I didn't understand the Israelites' blindness.

I've since learned the importance of patiently trusting in God's promises to fulfill His plan for my life and for my church. The apostle Paul states that through

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### **I became irritated at the cliché because so much importance was placed on the overall plan.**

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knowledge of the Word we discover the promise of being partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). As I compared my life since academy to the history of the children of Israel, the Scriptures took on a very personal meaning to me. God's promises are faithful, true, and certain! My academy teachers understood the value of trusting God's plan for our lives and the wisdom in faithfully following His instructions to secure the inheritance prepared for us through Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul admonishes us not to be slothful but followers of those who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises (Heb. 6:12).

As we witness the events in the journey of the Israelites, we see that "our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us of which we know nothing. Those who accept the one principle of making the service and honor of God supreme will find perplexities vanish, and a plain path before their feet."

We can rest assured that "in the long run" the victory is ours. Let us remember that the gift of our inheritance is sure. Prayerful study of the Word will prevent us from making wrong decisions that would cause us to fall short of promises that have been left us.

## **REACT**

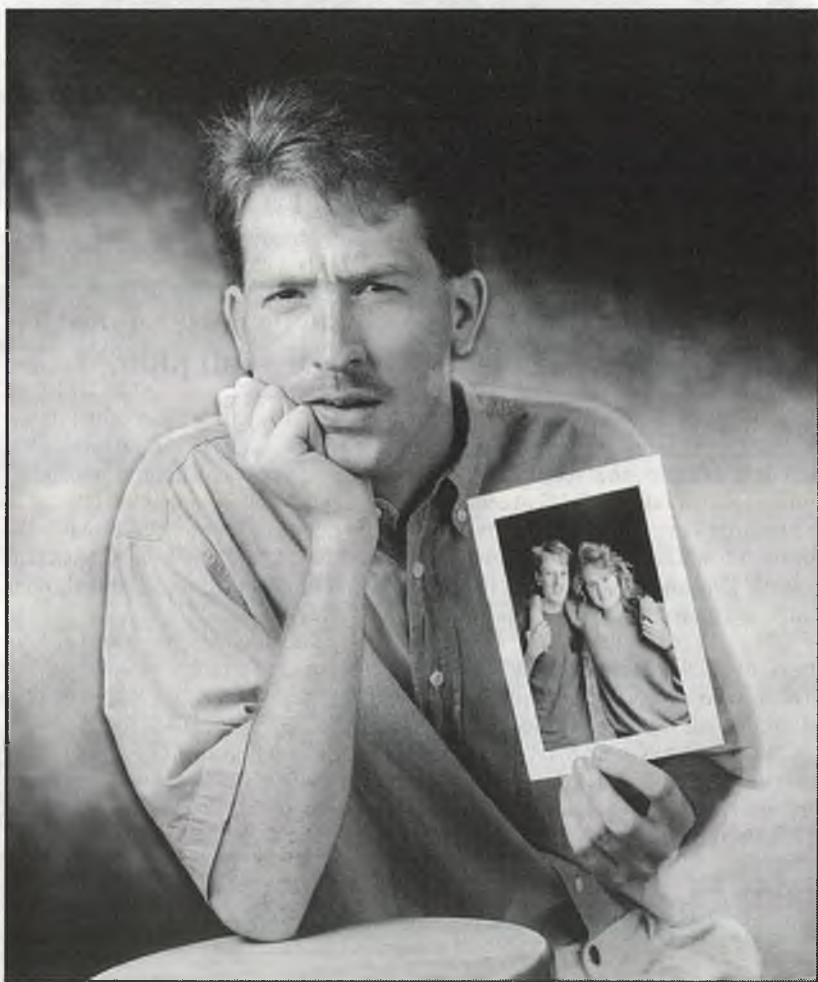
1. How much of a problem is impatience in your life?
2. In practical terms, how does a person overcome impatience?

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\* *The Desire of Ages*, p. 330.



# PASSING THE TORCH



**“One of you routs a thousand, because the Lord your God fights for you, just as he promised” (Josh. 23:10, NIV).**

## She Said . . . He Said . . .

### INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: 1 Pet. 3:14-17**

Last night I met with his closest friend. I really felt that this thing was going to work.

*I can't believe it! I just saw her having dinner with my best friend. Of all the low things to do. They seemed to be having such a great time, which made me steam but the more. She has a lot of nerve looking me straight in the face the next day and telling me how much she loves me. She didn't even flinch, coming across as genuine as ever. She doesn't know I'm on to her.*

I don't think he suspects a thing. You know, I really want to tell him. But that would really mess up everything. It's best that he not know. His friend is picking me up tonight at eight.

*At eight I went by her place to say hello, and I saw them jump into his car and*

### **At eight I went by her place to say hello, and I saw them jump into his car and speed off.**

*speed off. I was so angry I followed them. She had the gall to take him to our favorite eatery downtown. I wanted to storm in there and give her a piece of my mind, but I didn't want to make a scene. All this week she's been saying she can't go out, and she has been telling me . . .*

"I'm busy with a project," is what I've been telling him. He's so understanding. It may not be the best excuse I have come up with this decade, but it comes closest to the truth without letting him know what's going on. At times, it's difficult to put on this front, but his friend says it's for the best. I agree.

*Yes, I'm angry, but all I want to do is make a clean break. If this relationship is over, then I want to look her in the face and say it's over. I really love her, but, knowing what I know, it's best I confront her. I sped over to her place and stormed in, ready to put her in her place. I said, "There's something I need to say to you!"*

I yelled out as loudly as I could!

*She screamed.*

"Surprise!" with about 50 of his friends who . . .

*. . . seemed to appear from nowhere. All of a sudden I felt really dumb.*

He had this cute look on his face as his friends surrounded him. I looked over to him. It's as if he knew all along.

*By A. Allan Martin, a Ph.D. student in clinical psychology, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California.*

# Joshua's Guidelines

## LOGOS

### Joshua 22, 23

This week's lesson focuses on two speeches given by Joshua. Joshua 22 also allows us to view the Israelites' handling of group conflict.

Joshua's first speech was basically a formula for maintaining a relationship with the Lord: "To love the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to obey his commands, to hold fast to him and to serve him with all your heart and all your soul" (verse 5, NIV).

His second was a farewell speech to the leaders of Israel many years later. This message was a warning. Over the years Joshua had observed a tearing away at the relationship between the children of Israel and their God. This he blamed on alliances between the Israelites and nonbelievers.

After Joshua's first speech, the children of Israel faced a serious dispute. The tribes of Gad, Reuben, and Manasseh had participated in the battles that secured the lands surrounding Canaan. When they reached the shores of Jordan, en route home, they built an imposing altar. This caused the remaining tribes of Israel to prepare for war. They believed the building of the altar was a direct violation of God's covenant.

The angry masses were persuaded to follow a more cautious approach. A delegation representing each tribe went to investigate. In the final analysis, the Eastern tribes simply wanted to create tangible evidence that they, too, worshiped the true God. The investigating team went away joyful that they had been proved wrong.

Throughout history the church has resolved its various disputes with the use of committees, delegations, and councils. Unhappily, the results are not always similar to the success story found in Joshua 22. More often than not, church disputes lead to accusations, hurt feelings, and wounded egos.

The story of conflict found in Joshua 22 shows us a better way. War was the initial reaction of those who believed that the two-and-one-half tribes had engaged in wrongdoing. But when reason prevailed, inquiry and discussion led to a finding that the initial assumptions were incorrect.

In Joshua 22 we also find that the accused did not pursue a hostile, defensive position. There was no resentment in their reply, and they wisely took the opportunity to correct mistakes. Actions were taken to improve the situation, and future misunderstandings were avoided by placing an inscription on the altar. It read: "A witness between us that the Lord is God" (verse 34).

Perhaps the pattern of inquiry, discussion without resentment, and constructive remedial measures is not always the immediate response to church conflict because we do not fully appreciate the messages found in Joshua's first and second speeches.

Central to both messages is the idea that we must hold fast to the Lord. "Hold fast" implies that we cannot let go of God's hand, especially in the boardroom. In the real-world politics of a church organization, the boardrooms and administrative offices will often prove to be the strongest testing sites of one's commitment to love and serve the Lord.



We cannot let go of God's hand and expect the principles of servant-leadership and discipleship to prevail at committee meetings. Without earnest prayer and deeper study of what it means to be a servant-leader, as was Jesus, the personal agendas of those seeking to resolve church disputes may not give way to God's ultimate will.

We cannot let go of God's hand and understand that in any dispute the Holy Spirit has already settled on a resolution. The challenge is to arrive at the Lord's solution by relying on His leading.

"Hold fast to the Lord." In all things—decision making and otherwise—we

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## **We cannot let go of God's hand, especially in the boardroom.**

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cannot let go of God. That was Joshua's message for the children of Israel. It is still his message for us today.

### **REACT**

1. How can you have alliances with the world without allowing those alliances to compromise your spiritual values?
2. How are disputes resolved in your church? What changes would you suggest to improve the process?
3. What characteristics should you possess if you are involved in settling church disputes?

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*By Karen Same La Madrid, attorney and chief trust officer, department of legal affairs, Southern California Association of Seventh-day Adventists, Glendale, California.*

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# God's Promises Guaranteed

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Josh. 24:14**

Anxiety about the future of God's people plagued Joshua. In the last years of his life, he approached the "unavoidable end of the road with calmness and confidence."<sup>1</sup> His primary concern was the spirituality of the budding nation he had led for the previous 25 years. Joshua, aware of the potential influence of the neighboring Canaanites, called together the administrative heads of each tribe that occupied the west side of the Jordan River.

"Now I am about to go the way of all the earth. You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed," Joshua said (Josh. 23:14, NIV). Recall that through the seemingly endless wilderness trek, Israel knew about God's absolute power. The towering walls of water; the dust, sweat, and odor of the desert; the grumbling hunger, death, the blood lost in battles; were fresh in their minds. To Abraham, God guaranteed the land of Canaan as inheritance for his children (Gen. 12:7; 15:18-21). Four hundred

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### **From their history, the Israelites knew *intimately* the strength of God's promises.**

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seventy-six years later, the Israelites resided peacefully in their estates.

Joshua reiterates, "Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed" (Josh. 23:14). From their history, the Israelites knew *intimately* the strength of God's promises. He reminded the people that God fought for them. Countless times the children of Abraham doubted God. But just as often, God relieved their fears.

"One of you routs a thousand, because the Lord your God fights for you, just as he promised" (verse 10). They experienced His working in their lives. Consequently, the Israelites strongly believed in the promises of God.

Joshua appealed to the people themselves as witnesses that, so far as they had complied with the conditions, God had faithfully fulfilled His promises. He declared that the Lord had fulfilled His promises, so He would fulfill His threats.

"God is the life-giver. From the beginning all His laws were ordained to life. But sin broke in upon the order that God had established, and discord followed. So long as sin exists, suffering and death are inevitable. It is only because the Redeemer has borne the curse of sin in our behalf that man can hope to escape, in his own person, its dire results."<sup>2</sup>

## **REACT**

How have you felt about failed promises?

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1. *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 293.

2. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 522.

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By Diane Wong, a medical student at Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.

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# Nets, Snares, Scourges, and Thorns

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Josh. 23:13**

Joshua was presumably 110 years old when he addressed the Israelites with his farewell speech. Twenty years had passed since Joshua had led the Israelites to conquer Canaan. During this period, he observed that one of Israel's greatest dangers lay in the intimate relations formed with the Canaanites. God's people were marrying nonbelievers and were being influenced by the new land's cultural and social norms and values. In addition, the Israelites were inundated by the power, prestige, and wealth that had resulted from their new associations. The great leader admonished the Israelites about his concerns (Josh. 23:13).

"Snares and traps" imply a corrupt society that conceals its worst elements to deceive people. "Snares and traps" are placed first; not until the victim is secure do the "scourges and thorns" come.<sup>1</sup> "Scourges" would drive the Israelites in a direction in which they did not want to go in their lives. "Thorns" would blind their eyes

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## One of Israel's greatest dangers lay in the intimate relations formed with the Canaanites.

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from seeing through the enemy's deception.

In our modern society, "snares and traps" may be found in the belief that human fulfillment is attained only through human power, human success, human beauty, human wealth, and human love. Human fulfillment is daily advertised on television, in magazines, and other forms of media. Many of us become entrenched in a lifestyle that demands us to be humanly perfect. Power may be pleasant, wisdom and beauty may be delightful, and riches may give a certain prestige and sense of security, but life is not in these, for love supersedes all.<sup>2</sup> Without God in our lives, we are not fulfilled, for God is love.

Without God and the remembrance of His promises, we are unable to recognize our true sense of worth as His children. Only through God are we able to recognize the value of our lives and the special gifts that we were endowed with even before our own existence.

## REACT

1. How do you feel about the direction your life is going now?
2. In what ways do you see your life diverting from God's intentions?
3. In what ways do you see the church diverting from God's intentions?

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1. *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 293.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 292.

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*By Memrose Gonzales, a social worker for the Los Angeles County Department of Children's Services, Los Angeles, California.*

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## Keep a Line Open

### HOW-TO

**Key Text:** Josh. 22:18

Joshua 22 offers an example of a misunderstanding that could have had fatal results. A civil war could have resulted because of the actions of some of the tribes of Israel. Their actions were misunderstood, and had they not been given opportunity to explain themselves, war was inevitable because of the anger felt by the rest of the tribes of Israel.

Many times we as young adults are misunderstood by other members of our church. Our attitudes toward religion are different, our interpretations may be different, and our needs are often different from those of older generations at church. Our ideas may not seem important, and our concerns may not always be a priority, but we need to maintain an active role in the church. When faced with a misunderstanding, the following hints may be helpful in keeping the lines of communication open.

**1. Deal with the facts.** It is important to state your position clearly and deal

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### Our position still needs to be heard and considered.

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with the events relevant to the misunderstanding.

**2. Keep an open mind.** Understand that each person has a different experience and that his or her decisions reflect that experience. We are all entitled to our opinions and must respect one another's point of view.

**3. Be flexible.** Working together toward a common goal is the best way to bridge the gap between generations. A lot can be learned from those in different age groups. Don't force your issues on them. Instead, try to understand their side and then show them your side.

We all have choices to make, and sometimes we are scrutinized because we choose contrary to what our parents, teachers, or fellow church members want for us. We may be misunderstood, but the important thing to remember is that we matter. Our position still needs to be heard and considered, and we should give others the opportunity to hear our side. We may have different ideas, but those ideas are important, and we should continue to share them with our church family. Remember the power of prayer, and remember that we can talk to our Father and receive His guidance. All we need to do is ask.

### REACT

1. To what extent should a person insist on expressing his or her opinions in church matters?
  2. How can young adults overcome prejudice from their elders?
  3. How are the views of young adults received in your congregation?
  4. What is the proper role of a young adult in the church?
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*By Michelle Legaspi, a homemaker from Tujunga, California.*

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# The Guarantee

## OPINION

**Key Text: Josh. 22:3, 4**

Have you ever felt completely overwhelmed? It could be you didn't listen as carefully to someone's directions as you know you should have, and you found yourself hopelessly lost. It could be you procrastinated about studying for a final exam, and then it was too late. Or it could be you decided to put your money in a high-risk, high-yield investment, only to lose it all when the company went bankrupt. All these situations have one thing in common: each of them was completely and 100 percent avoidable.

The key thought for this week is broken into two parts. The first is how God shares His amazing promises of total victory with Israel. The second is the specific conditions that are to be met for their fulfillment.

Now using the three situations at the beginning of the section, we can show how this applies. In the first, even if we follow the directions to the letter, there is

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### **With God we are guaranteed that promises will be kept.**

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no guarantee that we won't become lost. In the second, no matter how diligently we study, this does not guarantee us an A on the test. And in the third, there is absolutely no guarantee that the investment will pay off as we hope it will. The reason for this is fairly simple. All these situations are based on human responses.

In Joshua 22:3, 4 we can see God fulfilling His promise to let the tribes return to their inheritance because they were diligent in obeying the Lord's command as taught to them through His servants, Moses and Joshua. In verse 5 we can see the conditions that have been set on this reward: "Take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the Lord charged you, to love the Lord your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul."

With God we are guaranteed that promises will be kept. With God's directions we cannot become lost. In diligently studying God's Word, we are guaranteed to make it through any test life throws our way. And by investing our lives with God, we are guaranteed a reward that is worth infinitely more than the amount invested. John 3:16 says it best. It is probably the most simple and most loved of these promises—all we need to do is believe. Guaranteed.

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*By John Gustafson, a nursing student at Glendale (California) Community College.*

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# TAKING SIDES



**“If serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord” (Josh. 24:15, NIV).**



# Life-changing Decisions

## INTRODUCTION

**Scripture: Josh. 24:15**

John and Jackie had been dating for three years. They had shared many memories together and really loved each other. They had very different goals, however. John was a theology major and was planning to go to Africa as a missionary. He had been wanting to do that as long as he could remember and felt strongly that it was God's will for his life. Jackie was going into education and wanted a quiet job near her family. The thought of ever leaving them was more than she could handle. Then one day John asked her to marry him, which would also mean moving to Africa to be with him.

This would be a hard decision that would have a lasting impact on her life. Jackie really loved John and wanted to marry him, but she wasn't so sure about leaving her family and her loved ones behind. Africa was just so far away. She would be far away from family and friends and all that was familiar to her. She would have to adjust to a different culture and new people who didn't even speak

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## **God loves us with an everlasting love, but He won't force us to return that love.**

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her language. Was John really that important to her? Was she willing to leave the warm security of everything and everyone she knew and loved just to be with him?

In our lives we, too, often have to make tough, life-changing decisions that will affect us for the rest of our lives. Some may even require great sacrifices.

One of the most important decisions we have to face is whom we will serve, who will be in control of our lives? Will we choose God, or will the pressures of the world prove to be more than we can withstand? Here on earth we have become fairly comfortable with our everyday lives. We are accustomed to things as they are and don't adjust well to change. Are we willing to step out, in faith, into the unknown territory of God's love? God loves us with an everlasting love, but He won't force us to return that love. We need to decide that we love Him with all our hearts and be willing to give Him first place in our hearts. Only then can He come in and save us from this world and the wages of sin, which is death. But are we willing to take our stand and make the sacrifices? It's not always going to be easy. He never promised us a life of ease. Just how much do we really love Him? How important is He to us?

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*By Heidi Zwick, a junior English major, Pacific Union College, Angwin, California.*

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# Serving Other Gods?

## LOGOS

### Joshua 24

#### **The Call to Gather (Josh. 24:1)**

It's Joshua's last great speech to the people he has led and served. He's called them together from their homes—rather like a camp meeting—once more to present them to God. His heart is full of love for the people he has served, and before he lays down his life, he's compelled to bring Israel once more to the altar of commitment. He wants to wake up their sleeping souls, to arouse them to action, to serve God without reserve.

#### **The Review of Israel's History With God (verses 2-13)**

Joshua begins his talk with a review of their history, giving a chronological account of God's dealing with His chosen people. Joshua wants to show Israel all the strokes of God's hand in their history. He points out that God called Abraham to give up the foreign gods he was serving and to follow the true God. He puts before them the escape from Egypt, the crossing of the mighty Red Sea, and the destruction of Pharaoh's army. He continues the story, pointing out all the instances in which God guided, protected, and won battles for them. He shows them that God has always kept His promises, reviewing the fact that they are currently living in the land promised to them—a land that flows with milk and honey.

#### **The Call for Undivided Commitment to God (verses 14, 15)**

Joshua now calls the people to serve God with true sincerity, to put away the idols that they are still holding onto. "There were four claimants to be considered: (1) Jehovah; (2) the Chaldean gods worshipped by their ancestors; (3) the gods of the Egyptians; (4) the gods of the Amorites among whom they dwelt." He asks them to choose whom they will serve; he demonstrates the activities of Jehovah in Israel's history, and he says, "If you be unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve" (verse 15, RSV). He ends this call to choose the god of their choice by unabashedly declaring that he and his household will serve Jehovah, regardless of what Israel's choice will be!

#### **The People's Response to the Call (verses 16-18)**

After listening to Joshua's citation of their history and all that Jehovah has done for them, the people declare that they, too, will serve the Lord alongside Joshua. You can almost hear them repeating in unison the works that Jehovah has done for them, as their hearts and souls are rekindled to their first love. Unanimously they throw down their idols of worship, to serve the Lord with their whole being; what a surprise they are in for when Joshua responds to their decisions.

#### **The Ramifications of Their Response (verses 19-28)**

One would think the response of the people of Israel would have cheered the heart of Joshua; however, that is not the case. Instead of affirming their choice with words of encouragement, he confronts them with a dark picture of God. "He dwells on those attributes which are least agreeable to the natural man, His holi-

ness, His jealousy, and His inexorable opposition to sin.”<sup>2</sup> Joshua wants to make sure they know what they are doing. He is not afraid to lose some to other gods. He will not play patty-cake with them concerning this gravest of all matters. He wants them to consider the cost of choosing Jehovah over the other gods, to realize that they cannot serve God and keep their idols. They must once and for all sever all ties with their idols.

Once again Israel responds, “We will serve the Lord!” (verse 21). With that, Joshua ratifies their decision to commit themselves to God by making a covenant with them. Taking a stone, he set it by the temple as a witness of what had taken place between the people and God. “The covenant was a transaction invested with special solemnity among all Eastern peoples. . . . The wanton violation of a

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## **Instead of affirming their choice with words of encouragement, he confronts them with a dark picture of God.**

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covenant was held an act of gross impiety, deserving the reprobation alike of God and man.”<sup>3</sup>

Having finished his sermon to the people, he sends them on their way back to their homes. Joshua’s final mission is completed, and Israel is restored; he can now rest.

### **REACT**

1. As you read this account of Joshua’s call to total commitment to God, where do you find yourself? Place yourself in the picture.
2. Are you still holding onto some small-but-important idol; if so, why?
3. What specific incidents in your life can you recall in which God’s leading was evident?
4. Why are God’s “holiness, His jealousy, and His inexorable opposition to sin” seemingly negative to “natural man”?
5. What are the positive aspects of God’s “holiness, His jealousy, and His inexorable opposition to sin”?

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1. W. Robertson Nicoll, ed. *The Expositor’s Bible: Deuteronomy and Joshua* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1956), vol. 1, pp. 390, 391.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 393.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 395, 396.

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*By Rich Wahl, a senior theology/communications major, Pacific Union College, Angwin, California.*

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# Whose Side?

## TESTIMONY

**Key Text: Josh. 24:15**

Toward the end of his life, Joshua again gathers the people of Israel together. He reviews with them how the Lord led them in the past and how He has blessed them. This is something we should do as well. "We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history."<sup>1</sup> After he reviews how the Lord had led them, Joshua asks them to decide whether or not they will serve the Lord. Each of us has to make this decision every moment of every day.

"There will be a sharp conflict between those who are loyal to God and those who cast scorn upon His law. Reverence for God's law has been subverted. The religious leaders are teaching for doctrine the commandments of men. As it was in the days of ancient Israel, so it is in this age of the world. But because of the prevalence of disloyalty and transgression, will those who have revered the

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### **"Every act of our lives affects others for good or evil."**

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law of God now cherish less respect for it? Will they unite with the powers of earth to make it void? The loyal will not be carried away by the current of evil. They will not throw contempt on that which God has set apart as holy. They will not follow Israel's example of forgetfulness; they will call to remembrance God's dealings with His people in all ages, and will walk in the way of His commandments.

"The test comes to everyone. There are only two sides. On which side are you?"<sup>2</sup>

This is a question that we all have to ask ourselves about everything that we do or say. "Every act of our lives affects others for good or evil. Our influence is tending upward or downward."<sup>3</sup>

"Choose you this day whom ye will serve; . . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15).

## **REACT**

1. How literally do you interpret the quotation "Every act of our lives affects others for good or evil"?
2. How has God led you in the past week?

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1. *Life Sketches*, p. 196.

2. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 120.

3. *Ibid.* p. 133.

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*By Randy Hess, a physical-science major with math and religion minors, at Pacific Union College, Angwin, California.*

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# Solid as a Rock

## EVIDENCE

**Key Text: Josh. 24:26**

If we only had someone who was solid as a rock to be a witness of our devotion to God. This is possibly what Joshua was trying to say when he placed the rock as a witness to the covenant that the people of Israel had made with God. It was to be a witness for eternity. And though the people would die one by one, that rock would always be a reminder of that covenant. This was Joshua's hope.

We can look at a witness in many ways. One is to see a witness as a person who, under certain circumstances, can keep one accountable for his actions. In a court of law, a witness testifies that he or she saw a crime committed or may testify to one's innocence. Witnesses are mandatory for certain types of agreement, such as marriages. Many times a notary public is needed as a witness to the signing of a document. Joshua used a stone to witness the covenant that the people had made that day. For years to come as the people of Israel walked by that place, they would

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## **They were accountable to that rock as their witness to their promises to serve God.**

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see that stone and be reminded of their commitment to serve the God of heaven and earth. They were accountable to that rock as their witness to their promises to serve God.

In our day we are catching on to what it means to have someone to whom we are accountable. We can open up to this person and not be afraid of being condemned. Yet this person will not allow us to continue hurting ourselves or others around us, including God. The old stone just isn't practical for an effective witness today. We need a witness who will not only remind us of our covenant with God but who will confront us when we fail to follow that responsibility.

Each of us had witnesses at our baptism, and we have all been witnesses to the dedication of other lives to God. As witnesses we may not always prove to be the solid rock, but we can take an interest in our church families and be willing to walk with one another as we all make our way to our Father's kingdom, our home, and lovingly encourage one another along the way.

## **REACT**

1. How can we become better witnesses to others?
2. What are some things I should or should not do when encouraging a fellow traveler to the kingdom?
3. In what way could a stone—an inanimate object—be considered a witness to some important event?
4. What similar symbols do we have today?

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*By Gil L. Hodges, a senior theology student at Pacific Union College, Angwin, California.*

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# Who Is Choosing Whom?

## HOW-TO

**Key Text: John 15:16**

“Choose you this day” (Josh. 24:15).

“You did not choose me, but I chose you” (John 15:16, NIV).

OK, who actually does the choosing? Does God choose me, or do I have to choose Him? The reflexive response is “Both!” Before you are distracted by self-congratulation for knowing the right answer, think some more.

Is the Christian walk primarily a series of disciplined decisions? Is the focus of spiritual life to be concentrated on making the right choices? Or, since God has chosen me, can’t I just relax, feel secure in His intentions, and let life happen without the stress of deciding about right and wrong continually?

The answer to this little conundrum is more than an academic discussion. Choosing to serve the Lord is difficult. Once the initial decision is made, an array of day-to-day choices still faces us: “Is this movie appropriate?” “What do I do when I’m alone?” “What major should I declare?” The list goes on and on. Not only

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## **The wisdom or foolishness of our choices has no effect on His love for us.**

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do we need to determine what is right, we also have to struggle with wanting to choose it.

We know that just because God chose us, He didn’t relieve us of the responsibility of choice. So why did Jesus emphasize the point that He chose us? He knows the weakness of our will. He knows the power of temptation and the force of discouragement. He knows the effect failure has on our spirit. Knowing all this, He still chose us. We are His beloved. The wisdom or foolishness of our choices has no effect on His love for us. His love provides a security from which we can make choices toward Him. Because we are loved, we can choose to love. Because we are accepted even though we have been wrong, we are moved to choose the right. It is only in our chosenness that we can choose, that we want to choose.

How can we choose to serve the Lord? The key is focusing on His choice. In your prayer time, instead of hitting God first off with your concern list, spend some time meditating on texts that declare His love for you. Psalm 103 and Isaiah 54:10 are great places to start. Allow the stress of life’s choices to drive you into the arms of the compassionate Father, who cannot and will not stop loving you.

## **REACT**

1. How should knowing that God “cannot and will not stop loving you” affect your feelings of self-worth?
  2. Do we choose God, or does He choose us? What is the difference?
  3. Explain the difference between God’s choosing us and the concept of pre-destination.
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*By Mike Dunn, campus chaplain, Pacific Union College, Angwin, California.*

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# Going Nowhere

## OPINION

**Key Text: Josh. 24:15**

I hate to make decisions. It was so much easier when I was a child. My parents would tell me what to do. My teachers would instruct me in what was right or wrong. The pastor preached about sin and salvation.

But then I grew up. More and more I was required to make decisions. The choices became more difficult. No longer were issues considered to be black or white. What appeared before me was a vast arena of gray. Where did right become wrong? There seemed to be plenty of choices that were clearly wrong, weren't they? Everything became more complicated. Sometimes behavior I thought wrong was considered to be right in special circumstances. I became more confused as I learned more about the world and studied the psychological aspects of human behavior. The easiest thing was not to make a decision at all. I could go on with the very same beliefs and behavior that I had grown up with and could avoid making a decision.

As long as I avoided making decisions, I wasn't growing as a person. I was going

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## As long as I avoided making decisions, I wasn't growing as a person.

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nowhere. Status quo was very comfortable. If I didn't make a commitment in either direction, I wouldn't make a mistake. But there came a time when a decision had to be made. Then I was able to move on.

It is the act of making a decision that allows a person to proceed, to get somewhere. Action does not take place without decisions. Maturation takes place with the ability to make proper decisions.

Decisions are a part of our Christian experience. God has allowed us the privilege of choice so we will be able to measure the issues, make the decision, and then take action. Keeping on the straight and narrow might be one way, but is there really any growth? Would it be walking through life with blinders on? We must have the faith and courage to face the forks in the road.

Many Christians are now questioning their beliefs. This is not a sin. It is part of spiritual growth. When there is a decision to be made about our relationship with God, we cannot back off and say that we are satisfied with the way we are now.

This is what Joshua was calling for. It is needed now. The day will come when we will have to make one more decision and then move forward—to eternity.

## REACT

1. What spiritual decisions are you facing?
2. What is holding you back from making a decision?
3. What would it take to motivate you to make the decision?

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*By Patricia Halburg Phillips, assistant to the president for college relations, Pacific Union College, Angwin, California.*

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## Next Quarter's Lessons

### The Holy Spirit and the Latter Rain

If you have not yet received a copy of *CQ* for third quarter 1995, here is a summary of the first two lessons:

#### **Lesson 1: Who Is the Holy Spirit?**

*Scripture:* John 14:15-26; 1 Cor. 12:11; Heb. 9:14; Deut. 6:4.

*Theme:* The presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian believer is the presence of the Deity. He is the Source of every noble thought and action.

#### **Lesson 2: Empowered by the Spirit**

*Scripture:* John 3:5, 36; 16:8-11; Rom. 7:1-8:10; 1 John 3:3-10; Mic. 7:18.

*Theme:* The Holy Spirit convicts of sin because He wants sinners to believe in Christ. Only by believing can we have the gifts of justification, eternal life, Christ's character, and victory over sin.

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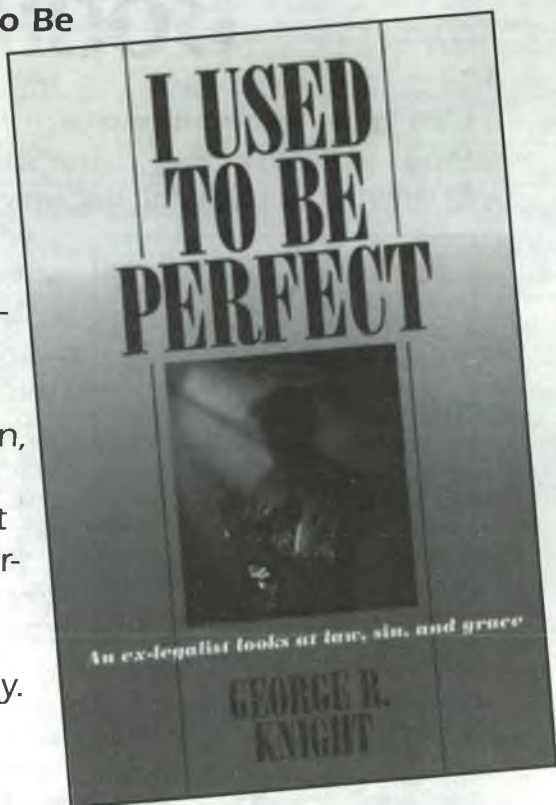
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