

Joshua 24:1-15, 31 (New International Version, ©2011)

¹ Then Joshua assembled all the tribes of Israel at Shechem. He summoned the elders, leaders, judges and officials of Israel, and they presented themselves before God.

² Joshua said to all the people, “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘Long ago your ancestors, including Terah the father of Abraham and Nahor, lived beyond the Euphrates River and worshiped other gods. ³ But I took your father Abraham from the land beyond the Euphrates and led him throughout Canaan and gave him many descendants. I gave him Isaac, ⁴ and to Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau. I assigned the hill country of Seir to Esau, but Jacob and his family went down to Egypt.

⁵ “‘Then I sent Moses and Aaron, and I afflicted the Egyptians by what I did there, and I brought you out. ⁶ When I brought your people out of Egypt, you came to the sea, and the Egyptians pursued them with chariots and horsemen^[a] as far as the Red Sea.^[b] ⁷ But they cried to the LORD for help, and he put darkness between you and the Egyptians; he brought the sea over them and covered them. You saw with your own eyes what I did to the Egyptians. Then you lived in the wilderness for a long time.

⁸ “‘I brought you to the land of the Amorites who lived east of the Jordan. They fought against you, but I gave them into your hands. I destroyed them from before you, and you took possession of their land. ⁹ When Balak son of Zippor, the king of Moab, prepared to fight against Israel, he sent for Balaam son of Beor to put a curse on you. ¹⁰ But I would not listen to Balaam, so he blessed you again and again, and I delivered you out of his hand.

¹¹ “‘Then you crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho. The citizens of Jericho fought against you, as did also the Amorites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Girgashites, Hivites and Jebusites, but I gave them into your hands. ¹² I sent the hornet ahead of you, which drove them out before you—also the two Amorite kings. You did not do it with your own sword and bow. ¹³ So I gave you a land on which you did not toil and cities you did not build; and you live in them and eat from vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant.’

¹⁴ “Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. ¹⁵ But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”

³¹ Israel served the LORD throughout the lifetime of Joshua and of the elders who outlived him and who had experienced everything the LORD had done for Israel.

a. [Joshua 24:6](#) Or *charioteers*

b. [Joshua 24:6](#) Or *the Sea of Reeds*

Oasis: Whom Will You Serve?
Joshua 24:1-15, 31

Preface: Welcome to our 5th LC Bible study in our sermon series “Living God’s Story.” This year we are working our way through the Bible, from Genesis through Revelation. So fasten your seat belt—it is quite a ride! These LC studies will complement the sermons, often using the same biblical texts, and will help your LC go deeper in personal understanding and application. These italicized portions are meant to resource and help you in leading.

Study’s BIG idea: The decision about your life’s primary orientation is yours: Whom will you choose to serve?

Possible starter question: Let’s make a list of life’s big decisions. What are some of the “big ones” that come to mind? (Who are some of the people in your life that help you raise these questions?)

Transitional comment: Let’s remember that Joshua was Moses’ assistant during the last years of Israel’s captivity in Egypt. He continued to serve Moses during the exodus and the 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. After Moses died, Joshua became Israel’s leader as they began to settle the Promised Land. His faithful obedience was pivotal. Now, toward the end of his 110-year life, Joshua reminds Israel of their special covenantal relationship with the LORD and clarifies their spiritual responsibilities. Let’s not only learn about Joshua’s leadership, but also about the people’s – and our – need to serve God unconditionally.

(Ask someone to pray for the Holy Spirit to lead your study, opening everyone’s eyes and hearts.)

Let’s listen as our passage is read: Who would like to read aloud for us? (3 parts – vs. 1-4; 5-13; 14-15 & 31)

Personal time to re-read and ponder: Take several minutes (2-3 min.) to read this again on your own. What words and phrases are repeated? What challenges/obstacles arise? What expectations are reaffirmed?

Overview together: What repeated words and phrases did you discover? Any BIG themes grab your attention?

Study Discussion Section I, Joshua 24:1-4:

O

In the first verse, what do we learn about this gathering?

O In vs. 2-4, Joshua speaks to the people, explaining what God wants them to know about their early ancestors. What strike you as some of the key facts? (*n.b. Keep using the “what else do you see?” question.*)

I What insights do you think the LORD is seeking to make/impart in this paragraph?

Section II, Joshua 24:5-13:

O Each of these 3 short paragraphs (5-7, 8-10, and 11-13) is about a different place (or people group) – but they are linked by several common threads: .

What are some of the differences between the three paragraphs? (*n.b. Egypt, wilderness/Amorites on east of Jordan, and peoples on west of Jordan in main area of Promised Land*)

What common threads do you see? (*n.b. Joshua and elders are part of these experiences, and referred to as “you.” Each people group is in opposition to Israel. Progress depends on God’s initiative, presence and power.*) (*n.b. It is worth pointing out that the switch of pronouns—from “I” to “he” in v. 7 is common in ancient literature and is not significant.*)

O What are some of the various kinds of external opposition and resistance with which Israel must deal?

- I Some of these external oppositions might be images or models of resistance that we experience in our Christian lives. Any present day examples of opposition or resistance that you think are similar in some way? (*i.e. hostility, aggressiveness, force, intimidation, influence, etc.*)
- O What are some of the ways in these verses (5-13) that God acts on behalf of the Israelites?
- I In v. 12 what insight does God keep emphasizing – and why is it so important to underscore?
 - A What are situations in our lives today where we need to seek God’s assistance or intervention in dealing with similar external oppositions?

Section III, Joshua 24:14-15 & 31:

- O What are the key expectations (or exhortations) that Joshua communicates to the people?
 - I Talk about the two key verbs – fear and serve. What do you think they each mean and don’t mean? (*n.b. fear of God is awe and respect; serve refers to giving God our total trust and loyalty.*)
 - I Why do you think people then might decide it is undesirable to choose serving the LORD? What would attract them to the gods of their ancestors – or the gods in the new and more immediate area of the Amorites? (*n.b. Given limited historical information about these gods, use your imagination.*)
- O Based on v. 31, what was the legacy/impact of Joshua and the elders?

Summary questions:

- Q In what ways was Joshua an effective leader? Identify some ways he sought to influence.
 - A What is one way/situation in which your influence might be more intentionally exerted?
- Q Joshua reviewed poignant parts of Israel’s history and experience with the LORD. Similarly, we can take time to remember what God has done—both in Scripture and in our own lives. Doing this can make a huge difference for us personally and for our LC/friendships/families. If we take time to remember, what differences will it make in our outlook and perspective?
 - A As we enter the Thanksgiving season, either as a LC or family, take the time to remember together what God has done in our lives. Do it now – or figure out a time when you will.
 - A Prayer together: Pray for one another – thanking God for His involvement in your lives!

Text notes (you can access biblical texts via www.Biblegateway.com)

- a. Key verse: Joshua 24:14: “Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away....”
- b. KEY: O = Observation; I = Interpretation; A = Application (or C = Challenge)
- c. Special thanks to Steve Hamilton for his super model, in leading our LC thru this passage 2 weeks ago.

Advice to study leaders:

- a. Complement OIA questions with “process questions” (what else? what more? what do others think?).
- b. Determine the core questions you’ll ask (know which ones to skip if pressed for time).
- c. Always reword questions in words that are comfortable for you (and, if the question doesn’t make sense to you, then discard it.) You want to “own” each question.
- d. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. Wait. Take your time; don’t rush people but encourage their participation. And avoid answering your own questions!
- e. Timing/pacing: allocate your time and move forward gently, with a steady pace.
- f. Application: Pace the study to conclude with “difference making” application.
- g. Secondary texts—use other texts sparingly, even if they are relevant. Such texts will push you into “teaching,” rather than facilitating. It can cause people to feel distracted or de-powered.
- h. I recommend the 1 vol. New Bible Commentary, Revised (21st Century ed, IVP). Well worth \$35.