

Preparing to Enter the Promised Land

Passages: Josh 1–5

Memory Verse

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.” (Joshua 1:9)

Knowledge of God’s Will [God’s Word]	Knowledge of God [God’s Divine Nature]	Good Works [Behavior]
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Understand God’s commission to Joshua.2. Learn how the Israelites’ trust in God allowed them to enter the Promised Land.3. Understand the preparations that God wanted His people to undergo before taking the land.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. God is faithful.2. God wants us to trust in Him.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Learn to seek God’s abidance and linger in the tabernacle to find strength and courage in God.2. Cultivate fear and trust in God’s power in order to change ourselves.

Overview

Events and Spiritual Teachings

- A. God’s Commission to Joshua
- B. Scouting the Land
- C. Crossing the Jordan River
- D. Gilgal: A Renewal of God’s Holy Nation

Life Application: Be Strong and Courageous

1. Joshua: Strength and Courage as a Worker of God
2. Rahab: Faith that Changes Your Heart

Memory Verse

Conclusion: Just as the Israelites had to undergo preparations before entering the Promised Land, we also must take steps to cultivate our own faith so that we might receive strength and courage to be a part of God’s holy nation.

Spiritual Teachings

Introduction

After wandering in the wilderness for forty years, it was finally time for the Israelites to enter the land God had promised to Abraham. Moses had just passed away on Mount Nebo, and Joshua had now picked up the baton of leadership. The land of Canaan, however, was still occupied, and before going into battle to possess the land, the Israelites had to make a few preparations.

A. God's Commission to Joshua (Josh 1)

Let's begin by reading Joshua 1:1–9. As Moses' spiritual successor, what three commissions did God give to Joshua in this passage?

1. To lead the people into the land and conquer Canaan (vv. 2–5).
2. To divide the land as an inheritance among the Israelites (v. 6).
3. To keep God's commandments (vv. 7–9).

"Be strong and of good courage"

God told Joshua to be strong and courageous three times (vv. 6, 7, 9). Joshua now bore a heavy responsibility on his shoulders. The Canaanites were strong and lived in fortified cities, such as Jericho, and with Moses gone, this would be the first time Joshua held such a heavy responsibility without a spiritual mentor to guide him.

God understood the burden that Joshua now bore and gave him the promise that as long as Joshua remained strong and courageous, God would lead him and the Israelites. But this strength and courage wasn't just about going into battle. It was also about Joshua having the strength and courage to hold on to his faith by trusting in God's promise (v. 6), obeying the laws (v. 7), and remembering that God would be with him as He was with Moses (v. 5, 9).

In the end, we know that the key to Joshua and the Israelites' success was not their personal skills or abilities. Their victories came from a deeper relationship with God. Because of their trust in His power, God gave them strength and courage. Moreover, the God who gave them their victory is the same God we worship today. Therefore, we should also be strong and courageous, knowing that "the living God is among [us]" (Josh 3:10)!

B. Scouting the Land (Josh 2)

Let's read Joshua 2. Joshua sent two scouts before the Israelites crossed into Canaan. This was a normal enough action to take, but this significant event was actually a first test in faith—the last time scouts were sent to Canaan, the Israelites ended up wandering forty years in the wilderness. This time, however, the results were very different.

1. The Scouts' Report

Upon returning, the scouts immediately reported to Joshua. How do their words compare to the report of the spies during Moses' time? Let's read Numbers 13:28–33 and do a quick comparison.

	Spies sent by Moses (Num 13:28–33)	Spies sent by Joshua (Joshua 2:24)
Number sent:	Twelve	Two
Report of majority:	"But the people who dwell in the land are strong [...]. We are not able to go up	"Truly the LORD has delivered all the land into our hands, for indeed all the

	against the people, for they are stronger than we.” (Num 13:28–31)	inhabitants of the country are fainthearted because of us.” (Josh 2:24)
Conclusion:	We can’t possibly enter the land.	The land is already given into our hands.
Result:	Wandered the wilderness for forty years, unable to enter the promised land.	Victory over the Canaanites, able to settle in the promised land.

Trust is something that is clearly expressed in our attitude and decisions. The words of the ten spies, for example, focused entirely on the obstacles that they faced rather than on God’s promise or the richness of the land. They expressed fear over the “giants” in Canaan, but in truth, the actual “giants” they were fighting were the ones within their own hearts: their lack of trust in God and their doubt in His power. On the other hand, the words of the two spies sent by Joshua were focused entirely on God because they trusted that the Lord had already given them the land. This same belief in God’s power also led Rahab to make a very different decision from her fellow citizens in Jericho.

2. Rahab

Of all the houses in Jericho, the two spies came to Rahab’s, and as a result of her actions, she was recorded in the hall of faith in the Book of Hebrews.

a. A leap of faith

Rahab told the two spies, “I know that the LORD has given you the land [...]. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt” (vv. 9–10). Although the Red Sea crossing had occurred forty years ago, it was clear that the news had left an impression on Rahab—enough that she was willing to change herself entirely.

It couldn’t have been an easy decision for her to turn away from the gods that she used to worship. But Rahab saw that the Israelites’ God was truly the Creator of heaven and earth, so she let her fear of God drive her to change her beliefs, and she received the spies with peace (Heb 11:31). As a result, she was saved from the destruction of Jericho and was given a place in the genealogy of Christ Himself.

b. A scarlet cord

Although Rahab received the spies in peace, their response demanded that she not simply believe. She also had to act by binding the scarlet cord to her window and by keeping her family in her home. It may have been difficult for Rahab and her family to remain still while watching the Israelites march around the city for six days as nothing happened. But they remained inside and chose to trust in His power. As a result, she and her family were saved.

We can see that God allows us to choose whether to seek trust in Him (Ps 37:4–6). Because they chose to trust in God, the scouts were able to experience the blessings of the promised land, and Rahab was saved from the destruction of Jericho.

C. Crossing the Jordan River (Josh 3–4)

After receiving the scouts’ report, the Israelites were almost ready to cross into Canaan. Let’s read Joshua 3:5–8. The crossing at Jordan parallels the Red Sea crossing in many ways, but it was also very different.

1. Place Your Feet in the River

Once the priests stepped into the Jordan, the waters were cut off upstream (Josh 3:14–16). As a result, the Israelites were able to cross over on dry ground. At the Red Sea, God had ordered Moses to lift his staff and stretch out his hand to divide the waters. This time, God commanded the priests to stand in the Jordan River. To place their feet into the waters was a gesture of trust. If the priests had not trusted in God’s power, they would have expressed their doubts, or hesitated to follow His instructions. In a way, stepping into the water was a step forward in the Israelites’ faith—they were no longer simply spectators of God’s miracles. This time, they were active participants.

2. Remember God’s Presence

The ark that the priests carried was a sign of God’s presence. But simply seeing and following it was not enough. After crossing the Jordan River, the Israelites came to Gilgal, which is located on the eastern border of Jericho. They carried with them twelve stones that they had taken from the Jordan River as they crossed and used them to build a memorial at Gilgal. Moreover, Joshua also placed twelve stones in the center of the Jordan riverbed. Why were these remembrances important?

Let’s read Joshua 4:4–9. The memorial was a reminder to the people and a way for them to share what God had done with the following generations. In the same way, the blessings and provision that we experience in our lives are meant to be shared as a testimony to those around us. When we share our personal experiences, we remind ourselves of God’s power, and encourage both ourselves and others to trust in Him.

This time, the Israelites took a more active role in God’s miracles. During their escape from Egypt, they simply followed Moses’ instructions. But now God wanted them to participate—they had to step into the waters, set up a memorial, and pass their experiences on to their children.

D. Gilgal: A Renewal of God’s Holy Nation

After crossing the river, the Israelites did not immediately set about conquering the promised land. First, they had a few important tasks that they had to follow. Let’s read Joshua 5:1–12. Upon first entering Canaan, the Israelites did not immediately prepare themselves for battle. The first thing that they did was spend time at Gilgal doing a few very important tasks. What were they? (*Circumcising the sons of Israel, keeping the Passover, and eating the fruits of the land instead of manna.*)

1. Prioritizing God

Circumcision was not just a symbol or sign, but an important part of a sacred agreement between God and His people. This agreement is important enough that God has chosen to uphold His faithfulness from generation to generation, despite how easy it is for us to forget our part of it. That this was the very first thing they did upon entering Canaan was an indication of God’s position in their lives. He was to be first and foremost in everything that they did.

2. Obeying God’s Commands

The Israelites began and ended their wilderness journey with the Passover, marking its importance to God’s people. This is the third recorded Passover that the Israelites observed since leaving Egypt. It is likely that many of this generation did not experience firsthand the very first Passover that the Israelites observed prior to the tenth plague. But becoming God’s holy nation and entering the promised land meant learning to obey God’s commands. After

observing the Passover, the result was God's blessings—manna ceased to fall and, that very same day, they were able to eat the fruit of the land.

We can see that upon entering Canaan, their priority was not in finding their enemies' weaknesses, gathering their military strength, or preparing for battle. Instead, the Israelites first had to renew their covenant with God and learn to keep His commands. Joshua relied on God's strength, Rahab trusted in God's power, and the two spies saw God's provision rather than the might of their enemies. The entire nation was now united with a similar conviction: God was first and foremost on their minds. As a result, they were able to experience God's provision and blessings and, later, His victory over their enemies.

Check for Understanding

1. What three commissions did God give to Joshua (Josh 1)?

- a. To lead the people into the land and conquer Canaan (vv. 2–5).
- b. To divide the land as an inheritance among the Israelites (v. 6).
- c. To keep God's commandments (vv. 7–9).

2. What was the key difference in the reports of the scouts sent by Moses compared to the scouts sent by Joshua? Due to their lack of trust in God, the words of the ten spies focused on the giants living in Canaan. The two scouts sent by Joshua, however, focused on God, because they trusted that the Lord had already given the land into the Israelites' hands.

3. What was remarkable about Rahab's actions? It may have been difficult for Rahab and her family to remain still while watching the Israelites march around the city for six days as nothing happened. But they remained in her home and kept the scarlet cord in the window. And because they chose to trust in His power, she and her family were saved.

4. What was different about the Jordan Crossing compared to the Red Sea Crossing? This time, the Israelites took a more active role in God's miracles. During their escape from Egypt, they simply followed Moses' instructions. But now God wanted them to participate—they had to step in the waters, set up a memorial, and pass their experiences on to their children.

5. What can we learn from the Israelites' actions upon entering the promised land?

They prioritized God by upholding the covenant (performing circumcision) and obeying His commands (keeping Passover). Becoming God's holy nation and entering the promised land meant learning to obey His commands—after, the result was receiving God's blessings.

Life Application

1. Joshua: Strength and Courage as a Worker of God

Joshua was transformed into a faithful worker for God over a lifetime of training. While serving Moses, he saw God's power with his own eyes (Deut 3:21), experienced God firsthand, and was given the commission to "lead this people across and [...] cause them to inherit the land" (v. 28 NIV; cf. 31:23). The responsibility given to him was heavy, but Joshua had spent his lifetime learning how to serve God by relying on God's power and drawing from His strength. So how can we learn to be strong and courageous, as Joshua was? From examining his life under Moses' training, we can find two key actions.

a. He sought God's abidance

While serving Moses, Joshua was dedicated to finding God and discovering His will. He sought to serve God each and every day of his life, even from his youth (Num 11:28). At a young age, Joshua already set himself apart from the other Israelites by assisting Moses closely and carrying out God's will (Ex 24:13; 33:11). Following Joshua's example, we need to seek out God's abidance by constantly evaluating God's presence in our daily lives. How meaningful is your

prayer or your Bible study? Do you forget about God for six days of the week outside of Sabbath? Do you actively seek out more time with God, or do you spend only what you feel is the “minimum requirement”?

Discussion

Gaining strength and courage requires seeking out God’s constant presence in our lives. What are signs of a life that lacks God’s abidance? What about a life that is full of God’s abidance? What aspect of your life can you focus on changing in order to make it look more like the latter?

b. He lingered in the tabernacle

Let’s read Exodus 33:11. “So the LORD spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. And he would return to the camp, but his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle.” Joshua’s strength and courage did not suddenly appear on the day God commissioned him. This was the result of a faith built up over time, and most importantly, a result of Joshua choosing to linger in God’s presence at every opportunity he could. Spending time in the tabernacle is what transformed Joshua into a good leader, and his resulting relationship with God made him strong and courageous.

Discussion

A relationship with God requires spending time in His presence. What are some ways we can linger in the tabernacle as Joshua did? (For example: SSC, fasting for the Holy Spirit.) Why do we tend to leave the tabernacle as soon as possible?

It is clear that the strength and courage that Joshua displayed was not just by his own power but was born out of an effort to draw close to God. By dedicating himself to finding God and lingering in the tabernacle to draw close to Him, Joshua built a foundation of strength and courage in God’s power. As a result, he was chosen by God to lead the Israelites successfully.

2. Rahab: Faith that Changes Your Heart

Have you ever tried to make or break a habit, or change your thoughts or attitude? If you have, you likely realized very quickly that people do not change so easily. We learned today that Rahab’s actions were highly unusual, a choice that required a complete change of heart. How was she able to gather the strength and courage to change herself so drastically? Although there were probably many different factors, we can consider two different things that allowed Rahab to change.

a. Fear of God

Rahab told the spies clearly that “our hearts melted” when describing her countrymen’s reaction to God’s power (Josh 2:11). The spies also noted how the Canaanites were afraid of the Israelites, and later, the Bible records that Jericho was “securely shut up because of the children of Israel” (Josh 6:1). On the other hand, Rahab welcomed the spies and hid them in safety despite her countrymen’s fears and any possible punishment. There are two different kinds of “fear” present here, and we can see their differences in the reactions of Rahab compared to the other citizens of Jericho.

One who fears God allows God’s will to drive their actions. For Rahab, that meant taking a leap of faith in entrusting her life to God rather than to her own people. To change ourselves as Rahab did, we need to train ourselves to fear God more than men. However, this also requires a

certain trust in God.

b. Trust in God's power

Trust in God can be very challenging to develop. It is hard to trust in someone whom we not only cannot see, but also whose solutions are so complex and vast that we cannot comprehend them. God's plans are so often beyond our imaginings that we begin to lose hope or even forget about Him when we don't see the immediate solutions that we expect to see. But the Bible says, "Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass" (Ps 37:5). We may not see God's power at work, and we may not understand how He plans to protect us, but we need to tie the scarlet cord to our window and trust that He will.

Another reason it is difficult for us to trust Him is because we don't like to give up control. It is human nature to rely on our own strength. But King Solomon wrote that we must "lean not on [our] own understanding" (Prov 3:5). Rahab and her family were saved because she relinquished control of their lives over to the God of Israel. In much the same way, when we entrust the steering wheel to God, He will take charge of our lives' directions and take care of us.

We have been given the precious status of God's children, but our actions may not reflect respect or fear towards our Creator and Father in heaven. Do you trust in God more than the knowledge or understanding of mankind, or do you try to wrestle with problems with your own power before turning to God? Do you let Him take control of your decisions? When we cultivate fear and trust in God's power, He will give us the power to change our hearts. When we do so, like Rahab and her family, we will experience His saving grace.

Memory Verse

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9)

Meaning

When we are able to take courage in the Lord and have a strong conviction in His presence, there is nothing to be afraid of in our lives. Any challenges that we face will seem small compared to our almighty God. He can help us to overcome any struggles that we may have, physically, mentally, or spiritually. He can strengthen us when we are burdened with responsibilities, and He can give us the courage to change ourselves and live boldly for the Lord!

Conclusion

To enter the promised land, Joshua and the Israelites had to demonstrate their trust in God and their resolve to follow His commands. The two scouts saw a land given by God, and Rahab received the spies in peace. The Israelites later followed God's instructions in crossing the Jordan River and in renewing their covenant with God at Gilgal. Just as they had to undergo preparations before entering the promised land, we also must take steps to cultivate our own faith so that we might receive strength and courage to be a part of God's holy nation.

Lesson 8 Student Homework Assignment Answer Key

1. What does this verse teach us about how we can face any obstacles, burdens, or responsibilities?
When we are able to take courage in the Lord and have a strong conviction in His presence, there is nothing to be afraid of in our lives.
2. “[Rahab] said to the men: ‘I _____ that the _____ has _____ you the land, that the _____ of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are _____ because of you.’” (Joshua 2:9)
know, Lord, given, terror, fainthearted
3. What was so different about the two scouts’ report compared to those sent by Moses in the past?
The words of the ten spies focused entirely on the obstacles that they faced rather than on God’s promise or the richness of the land. On the other hand, the words of the two spies sent by Joshua were focused entirely on God because they trusted that the Lord had already given them the land.
4. What can we learn from the Israelites’ actions upon first entering the promised land?
They prioritized God by upholding the covenant (performing circumcision) and obeying His commands (keeping Passover). Becoming God’s holy nation and entering the promised land meant learning to obey His commands—after, the result was receiving God’s blessings.
5. How did Joshua learn to receive strength and courage from God while serving under Moses?
He sought God’s abidance, and he lingered in the tabernacle.
6. Why is it often difficult for us to trust in God as Rahab did? Share a time when you struggled to trust in God’s plan and instead tried to rely on your own wisdom or understanding. How did God teach you to trust Him after this incident, or how did you turn your heart back to trusting God?
*Because we don’t like to give up control. It is human nature to rely on our own strength.
Personal answers.*