

Study Through the Bible

Joshua: The Journey of a Faith Walker - Study 1

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

Move Forward in Faith

God has power in your circumstances.

The Hebrew nation had come to the edge of the land of promise, a land given to them by God. But they retreated. They withdrew their forces. They evacuated. And for 40 years they wandered in the desert, defeated in their minds by an enemy that never fired a single shot or mounted a campaign against them.

Now 40 years later, the Hebrew nation and their leader, Joshua, were back on the brink of the Promised Land. Ready for retirement, no doubt Joshua was apprehensive about taking on a major military campaign against a formidable foe.

This study will challenge you to put your faith into action, to live in the present rather than the past, and to recognize God and his power in your circumstances.

Scripture:

Joshua 1:1-7, 9, 18

Based on:

"Journey of a Faith Walker," Series Builder by Rick Ezell, PREACHING TODAY SERMONS

PART 1

Identify the Current Issue

The Hebrews were outmanned and outnumbered by a daunting opposition. Living off the desert for 40 years, they were in no condition to assemble a major military campaign. Taking the land looked as improbable as the island nation of Britain winning against the mighty onslaught of the German juggernaut in World War 2. If the truth were known, the rank and file Hebrew would rather evacuate than mount a charge.

But, wars are not won by evacuations.

PART 2

Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching point one: Live in the present, not in the past.

Teaching point two: Affirm the presence of God in your circumstances.

[Q] With which statement do you find yourself agreeing most:

- 1) God expects more of me than I can handle.
- 2) I can't wait to find out what God has planned next for me.
- 3) I am more prepared today than I was in the past for whatever comes my way.
- 4) I am fearful of attempting things beyond my ability.

Teaching point three: Rely on God's power to fulfill his commands.

Teaching point four: Moving forward in faith requires action.

PART 3

Apply Your Findings

Inadequate as Joshua felt, he took action. In spite of the dangers ahead, he was a faith walker. He moved forward and received the blessings that awaited him. A poem by Patrick Overton says it best:

When you walk to the edge of all the light you have
And take that step into the darkness of the unknown
You must believe that one of two things will happen:
Either there will be something solid for you to stand on
Or God will teach you how to fly.

—Study by Rick Ezell, with JoHannah Reardon

Study Through the Bible

Joshua: The Journey of a Faith Walker - Study 2

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

How Flawed Rahab Saved a Nation

God delights in using the weak to accomplish his purposes.

When American novelist William Faulkner was asked about the literary people he associated with, Faulkner shrugged his shoulders and said he didn't know any literary people. "The people I know are other farmers and horse people and hunters, and we talk about horses and dogs and guns and what to do about this hay crop or this cotton crop, not about literature," he said.

Likewise, God seems most interested in people who are unpretentious and have known desperation and defeat. They are flawed and wounded and appear to have nowhere to turn. They pray desperate prayers. They hold onto shattered dreams. They are trapped by wrong choices. They are estranged from society, often rejected. They are like Rahab.

This study demonstrates that God delights in using the weak to accomplish his purposes.

Scripture:

Joshua 2

Based on:

"Journey of a Faith Walker," Series Builder by Rick Ezell, PREACHING TODAY SERMONS

PART 1

Identify the Current Issue

Everyone loves an underdog. It's a delight when the unexpected happens and the one least likely to shine does. God turns our sensibilities topsy-turvy when he chooses to use Rahab.

God loves to turn things upside-down. He selects the most unexpected people to work with. He specializes in using the rejects of society, the broken and flawed, the down and out. Consider how God used Abraham, a liar; Moses, a murderer; David, an adulterer; Peter, the denier; Saul, a killer. The list goes on and on. God works through the most ordinary and unlikely people who are on the edge of social respectability.

Knowing that's how God works is reassuring. It gives us hope. It gives us possibility.

PART 2

Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching point one: God delights in using the weak to accomplish his purposes.

Teaching point two: God works today just as he did in the past.

Teaching point three: God wants to use you.

PART 3

Apply Your Findings

The story of Rahab does not end at Joshua 2. Notice the following:

1. Rahab survived the battle of Jericho and became a member of the Israelite community.
2. Matthew 1 chronicles the ancestors of Jesus Christ. Rahab is on that list.
3. Jewish tradition holds that Rahab was one of the four most beautiful women who ever lived.

—Study by Rick Ezell, with JoHannah Reardon

Study Through the Bible

Joshua: The Journey of a Faith Walker - Study 3

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

Crossing Jordan

God honors radical, risk-taking faith.

God loves it when we have all-out, daring faith in him. Nowhere was this more evident than when Joshua was preparing to lead the Hebrews into the Promised Land. One big obstacle stood in their way: the Jordan River. This border to the Promised Land represented the great defining boundary that separated the Hebrews' past from their future, from God's promise to its fulfillment. The Jordan presented a challenge as well as a promise. The crossing required a new faith experience in order for them to occupy the land God had waiting for them.

This study encourages us to wait on God, consecrate ourselves to him, and step out in faith.

Scripture:

Verse 3

Based on:

Based on

PART 1

Identify the Current Issue

There are battles before victory. There are struggles before celebration. There are steps before arrivals. There is practice before perfection. There is preparation before completion. There is matriculation before graduation.

Over and over in Scripture this pattern is repeated: The Israelites had to march to the Red Sea before God parted it. Namaan had to wash seven times in the water before God cured him of leprosy. Gideon had to reduce his army from 32,000 down to 300 before God would deliver them from the Midianites. The loaves and fishes were given up before Jesus multiplied them.

PART 2

Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching point one: Often we have to wait before moving ahead with God.

Teaching point two: We must consecrate today before receiving the blessings of tomorrow.

[Q] Which of the following sound like a valid way to consecrate your life? You may choose more than one, but you must explain why you are choosing each one.

- 1) I will spend at least an hour in prayer each day.
- 2) I will give up secular entertainment for the rest of my life.
- 3) I will ask Christ to daily live his life through me.
- 4) I will make sure that I'm doing at least one unselfish act daily.

Teaching point three: We have to step out in faith to see God act.

PART 3

Apply Your Findings

When we risk giving generously, we discover that we really can trust God to take care of us. When we risk asking forgiveness of another person, we discover that God really will honor our confession. When we risk using our spiritual gifts, we know the joy of being used by God. When we risk making a phone call to encourage or show concern, we know the satisfaction of touching another human being at their point of need.

—by Rick Ezell, with JoHannah Reardon

Study Through the Bible

Joshua: The Journey of a Faith Walker - Study 4

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

The Mark of Distinctiveness

God calls his people to holiness.

God has always desired that his people be set apart—that there be a distinguishing mark upon them, that they be different. When the Hebrews crossed the Jordan to occupy the Promised Land, God marked them through an act called circumcision. Circumcision was an outward sign of inward obedience. It was a physical act that marked their identity as the people of God.

In like manner, God calls his people to holiness today. This study will demonstrate that a holy person is not an odd person, but a distinct person, who reflects God to those around them.

Scripture:

Joshua 5:1–9

Based on:

"Journey of a Faith Walker," Series Builder by Rick Ezell, PREACHING TODAY SERMONS

PART 1

Identify the Current Issue

C.E. Montague's novel, *Rough Justice*, describes Bron, a little boy who went to church for the first time with his governess. Bron watches the preacher climb into the high pulpit and hears him tell some terrible news about a brave and kind man who was nailed to a cross, terribly hurt, a long time ago, and who still feels dreadful pain even now, because there was something not done that he wants them all to do.

Little Bron thinks that the preacher is telling the story because a lot of people are there, and they will do something about it. Bron sits impatiently on the edge of the pew. He can hardly wait to see what the first move will be in righting this injustice. But he sits quietly and decides that after the service someone will do something about it. Little Bron begins to weep, but nobody else seems at all upset. The service ends, and the people walk away as if they had not heard such terrible news, as if nothing remarkable had happened.

As Bron leaves the church, he is trembling. His governess says, "Bron, don't take it to heart—someone will think you are different."

PART 2

Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching point one: God wants his people to be set apart.

Teaching point two: God calls his people to holiness.

Teaching point three: The problem is we're afraid to be different.

Teaching point four: God's people should think and act differently.

PART 3

Apply Your Findings

Today the world has a desperate need for people who are different. Living such a way, like circumcision, will not be easy; in fact, at times it will be painful. But it will make a difference.

—by Rick Ezell, with JoHannah Reardon

Study Through the Bible

Joshua: The Journey of a Faith Walker - Study 5

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

When God Thwarts Your Plans

Interruptions remind us that God is in control.

The night before decisive battles is never easy. Joshua, the commander of the Hebrew army, knew the feeling the night before the initial battle at Jericho to take possession of the Promised Land. He knew the tactical and morale importance of winning this battle.

In the middle of that night, while walking in the wilderness, Joshua was confronted by a solitary figure with a drawn sword. God revealed himself in human terms to arrest Joshua's attention, to deliver an important message.

This study will help you learn what Joshua was learning, what all faith walkers eventually learn: that when we say yes to God, he has the right to interrupt our lives.

Scripture:

Joshua 5:13-6:5

Based on:

"Journey of a Faith Walker," Series Builder by Rick Ezell, PREACHING TODAY SERMONS

PART 1

Identify the Current Issue

Although Jericho was not a large or hugely populated city, it was well fortified with a strong military presence. The Hebrews were so close to the land of milk and honey, they could taste it. But there seemed to be no way under, over, around, or through. From their perspective it looked hopeless.

The night before decisive battles is never easy.

God got Joshua's attention to reveal some valuable lessons. And so it will be for us.

PART 2

Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching point one: Presence is more powerful than words.

Teaching point two: With God's presence comes God's promise.

Teaching point three: God's ways and timing are better than ours.

[Q] How do you make plans? Discuss the pros and cons of each of the following:

- 1) I pray and ask God for wisdom.
- 2) I read the Scriptures and then do what seems best.
- 3) I discuss it with people I trust.
- 4) I act on my "gut" instinct.
- 5) I plunder ahead on my own. It's easier to ask forgiveness than permission.

Teaching point four: God doesn't come to take sides, he comes to take over.

PART 3

Apply Your Findings

The night before decisive battles is never easy. The next time you find yourself pacing the floor, give God control of your situation, put him in charge, and go back to bed.

—by Rick Ezell, with JoHannah Reardon

Study Through the Bible

Joshua: The Journey of a Faith Walker - Study 6

PARTICIPANT'S GUIDE

Sin Will Find Us Out

Covering up sin leads to severe consequences.

If you ever think that sin is not serious business to God, then read the story of Achan and the defeat of the Israelite army at Ai. The lessons God wants to teach us are too important to be trivialized, and often a tragedy is the best way to get our attention.

In this session we will see that all humans are sinners, but our sin does not have to be fatal. Through Christ's work on the cross and our confession, we can find forgiveness.

Scripture:
Joshua 7

Based on:
"Journey of a Faith Walker," Series Builder by Rick Ezell, PREACHING TODAY SERMONS

PART 1

Identify the Current Issue

The battle at Jericho was a miraculous victory. Without firing a single shot or raising a single weapon, the walls of the mighty fortress came tumbling down.

The next battle in the campaign was to destroy the town of Ai, a dusty crossroads compared to the fortress of Jericho. The spies sent to Ai to investigate reported that it would not be necessary to send the entire army to the battle; two or three thousand troops would be sufficient. Without consulting with God, these men traveled to Ai and were soundly defeated.

PART 2

Discover the Eternal Principles

Teaching point one: Sin contaminates every human being.

Teaching point two: Sin contaminates the being of every human.

Teaching point three: It is not fatal to be a sinner.

PART 3

Apply Your Findings

In the movie *The Last Emperor*, the young child anointed as the last emperor of China lives a life of luxury with 1,000 servants at his command. "What happens when you do wrong?" his brother asks. "When I do wrong, someone else is punished," the boy emperor replies. To demonstrate, he breaks a jar, and one of the servants is beaten.

In Christianity, Jesus reversed that ancient pattern: when the servants erred, the King was punished. Grace is free only because the giver himself has borne the cost.

—*Philip Yancey, What's So Amazing About Grace? (Zondervan, 1997)*

This is the message of the cross. It's the message of redemption. It's the hope of all defective people everywhere.

—*by Rick Ezell, with JoHannah Reardon*