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BIBLE
STUDIES



Leading Wherever You Are

7 Weeks in the Book of *Joshua*

Teresa Swanstrom Anderson

Teresa's Bible studies are some of the best on the market. Not only has she found a way to teach biblical truth with profound wisdom, but she does so in such a winsome and relatable way. This resource is a treasure!

KAT ARMSTRONG, author of *No More Holding Back* and *The In-Between Place*

Teresa, my pink-haired theologian, I want to hug you for writing these studies. You have shared practical, personal, and challenging ways to make the Bible come alive. When a smart woman chases after the heart of God, we all win.

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MARSHAWN EVANS DANIELS, Godfidence Coach, TV personality, reinvention strategist for women, founder of SheProfits.com

With a relatable voice, Teresa makes studying the Bible approachable for women at any stage of faith. The Get Wisdom Bible Studies are a 360-degree look at God's Word with historical contexts, word studies, hands-on application, and commentary for each day's devotion. The studies are timely with varied messages of practicing contentment, trusting God in hard times, and leading the next generation. Teresa is serious about knowing God and how His character changes His people—the reader is not only encouraged to learn but to *live* the truths in these Bible studies.

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Get ready for a Bible study that breaks the mold. Self-proclaimed “Bible nerd” Teresa Swanstrom Anderson has a passion for Scripture that is contagious. But don't you dare think this is a nerdy approach to study. Her warm and approachable style feels like a conversation with a wise and humble friend. Along the way, she will challenge you to *pick up your Bible* as she weaves linguistics, history lessons, and personal stories around a passage. I can't wait to recommend this series to women in our church.

GREG HOLDER, lead pastor at The Crossing; author of *The Genius of One* and *Never Settle*



GET WISDOM BIBLE STUDIES

*Leading
Wherever
You Are*

7 Weeks in the Book of *Joshua*

Teresa Swanstrom Anderson

NavPress 

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with Tyndale House Publishers



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Leading Wherever You Are: 7 Weeks in the Book of Joshua

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For Priscilla Shirer, Beth Moore, and Jennie Allen.

You didn't know it, but you saying yes to stepping into leadership helped shy, introverted me do the same. Thank you for showing me what a woman of depth, dedication, kindness, and faith looks like as we strive to teach women how to fall in love with God's Word.

Let's Connect



*Take a few moments to be replenished . . .
so that you can pour into others.*



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GetWisdomBibleStudies.com

I can't wait to discover all God is doing in your life through this exploration of leadership in the book of Joshua. I'd love to see and read all about it! Post using the hashtag #leadingwhereveryouare on Instagram, Twitter, and/or Facebook so we can encourage one another as we go through this study.

Get to know Teresa



Teresa Swanstrom Anderson is a blogger, author, speaker, and Bible study teacher. Teresa grew up in Seattle, but spent her middle school years in Guatemala and has a deep love for people in developing countries. Now living in Denver, Colorado, with her husband and six children, she spends her days wiping off sticky counters, Instagramming, and blogging at teresaswanstromanderson.com. She is the author of *Beautifully Interrupted* and has published several Bible studies on her blog. The Get Wisdom Bible Studies are her first traditionally published studies, taking her passion for studying the Bible and helping women to a broader audience.



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Introduction

*Never walk away from Wisdom—she guards your life;
love her—she keeps her eye on you.*

Above all and before all, do this: Get Wisdom!

Write this at the top of your list: Get Understanding!

*Throw your arms around her—believe me, you won't regret it;
never let her go—she'll make your life glorious.*

*She'll garland your life with grace,
she'll festoon your days with beauty.*

PROVERBS 4:6-9, MSG

As a society, we not only like instant gratification—we expect it. We have on-demand movies, Netflix, and Hulu. When our favorite artist releases a new album, we download it onto our phones. If we want a new book, we can get it on our Kindle or listen to it on Audible with a single click. Even two-day shipping seems too slow for us sometimes, doesn't it?

But here's the thing: Growing in our relationship with Christ isn't necessarily quick. There is no instant download to encountering God. We can't pull up into the Starbucks drive-through and leave minutes later with a full grasp of the Bible and what it says about God and means for our lives.

So if you want a bullet-points-only, CliffsNotes experience of the Bible, this study may not be for you. But don't let that freak you out! I get that life is busy, and I promise—we *can* engage deeply with God through His Word in the midst of everything we're doing without being overwhelmed.

If you are a woman whose life isn't perfect, who struggles balancing all aspects of life and wearing all the hats—but you have a genuine desire to grow in your relationship with Jesus in intentional ways that don't require hours a day—then welcome! I'm hopping up onto my chair and throwing confetti around because, my dear friend, you're exactly where you're supposed to be. Together we're going to see the pages of the Bible come alive—and see the God of the Bible become more a part of our everyday experience as a result.

WHY WE STUDY THE BIBLE

The last time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples after His resurrection, mere moments before His ascension, something happened that is crucial for us to remember as we approach the Bible together. Luke 24:44-45 says, “Then he said to them, ‘These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures” (NRSV).

We should be encouraged: Jesus opened their minds to understand that everything written about Him in Scripture must be fulfilled—but I am certain this isn't the only time Jesus has given individuals unique understanding.

He may even give it to you.

But here's the thing: These men had heard Scripture all their lives. They were ordinary working-class men without higher education. Not one of them had gone to school to become a rabbi, and they did not own a scroll or Bible. Yet because Scripture was read every time these men went to worship and biblical stories were retold throughout their lives, this knowledge was deep within the recesses of their minds and hearts. From childhood, these disciples heard God's Word.

We can know something, however, without understanding it. And that's where the disciples were operating from.

Jesus decided to use this moment before His ascension to turn

the spigot, and all their previous knowledge, the buildup of years of knowing God's Word, poured out. Except now, with Jesus' hand on that faucet, everything they had learned and heard through the years suddenly made sense to them.

With the help of Jesus, knowledge was finally tied together with comprehension, and the disciples had a major aha moment.

Just like the disciples, we won't have aha moments every time we open the Bible, worship, or pray. We will have days or even weeks when we don't "feel" any big revelations or hear whispered promptings from the Lord.

Do you feel like you're reading the Bible wrong or even wasting your time without having those heartfelt or aha moments? If you're like me, you want those heart moments all the time. That's when we feel especially close to Jesus. But here's the thing . . . it's not about us. Reading the Bible is not about having God give us a warm fuzzy feeling. It's not to show us how to act and react; neither is it about Him speaking to us. Spending time in the Word is about learning who God is. It's about growing in knowledge of the Creator of the universe and our Lord and Savior. Period.

When I realized a few years ago that the Word of God is not about me but about Him, I was rocked. I realized every verse within every page is written with the intent of us learning more about God's character and love.

*Every story, every illustration, and every law
loops back around to teach us who He is.*

The Bible obviously shares how we should live and who we should be as lovers of the Lord, but it does so in relation to who God is and how He views us. That's why, whether you've loved Christ for five minutes or five decades, I'm just thrilled to be walking through this study of God's Word with you. Together we get to learn more about who He is! As we continue spending time with Him both in the

Word and in prayer, we'll be more prepared to experience Him when He opens our minds like He did for the disciples.

BEFORE WE BEGIN

The Bible

When I was young, I loved collecting. Specifically, I collected bottle caps and napkins. It's okay, you can laugh—it's totally weird. I had boxes of party napkins. I just loved that they were all different, like little pieces of art. Looking back, it kind of makes sense—I love entertaining and setting a pretty table. I still collect those fun napkins so I'm always ready when someone comes over, but I've also begun to collect something else: Bibles.

Why Bibles? Well, the two-hundred-year-old ones passed down from my grandfather are admittedly pieces of art, but I also have shelves of current versions. Still scratching your head as to why I'd have more than one? Well, let me tell you: because different versions say things in different ways.

A great way of understanding Scripture is consulting various translations. Though these Bibles may be worded differently, they don't ultimately differ in meaning and intent, because they all come from the Greek and Hebrew languages the Bible was originally written in.

Some translations are more literal in interpretation than others, however. For example, both *The Message* (MSG) and The Voice translation (VOICE) capture the tone and essence of the text, while the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), English Standard Version (ESV), and Amplified Bible (AMP) translations are known to be more literal, emphasizing word-for-word accuracy, literary excellence, and depth of meaning. In other words, versions like *The Message* should be looked at as a reading Bible (almost like a commentary that illuminates the text), rather than as a literal Bible, which is better for deep study.

Don't feel like you need to be a crazy Bible-lady like me, with shelves full of varying translations. The great thing about the internet is you can simply find different versions online. I encourage you to download the Bible Gateway or YouVersion app on your phone or head to their sites on your laptop. Try out a few different versions, and see which ones resonate with you best. If you have a favorite Bible already, google what the Bible you're using is translated for. Is it written for tone and intended meaning? Or is it translated for literal, word-for-word interpretation? Is it a reading Bible or a studying Bible?

In many weeks of this study, we'll explore a reading version of the passage, such as *The Message*, *The Voice*, or *The Passion Translation*, which will help us grasp the thematic picture in more accessible language. As we break apart each passage and dive in deeper, we will use the literal translations, so make sure you have one at the ready. I'll include the text from The English Standard Version, but in most cases, you will need to reference your own Bible or the Bible app on your phone for the rest. Make sense? Great!

Commentaries and Resources

If we want to be bold women who love God deeply, we must be women of Scripture. We must love the Bible in a way that surpasses others' opinion and research. To become spiritually literate, we must become a student of the Word. Commentaries and books about the Bible are incredibly helpful, but we need to make sure we're not spending more time in books *about* the Bible than in the *actual* Bible.

To be clear, I'm not saying we shouldn't refer to sermons and use commentaries. It would be foolish not to take advantage of the wisdom of others whom we have deep respect for. God has most certainly given the gift of discernment in regard to unraveling the Scripture to unique individuals.

I often study with a commentary or two nearby (in fact, I currently have three opened here on my desk),¹ but through the years, I've learned how important it is to make my own interpretation and

have my own thoughts about a Scripture passage (even if it's mostly questions) before considering someone else's thoughts and interpretation. I need to make sure my first Guide is God, rather than humans.

The first thing I'd like us to do is turn to a resource that can help us wrestle with what we're actually reading in the Bible. As we sort through God's Word, we need to be curious about the meanings beyond simply our initial understanding. That's why, in addition to adding the Bible Gateway or YouVersion app onto your phone, I'd also like you to download the Blue Letter Bible (BLB). This is really important because we're going to reference it All. The. Time.

All of these apps I'm recommending are free, but if you want to download only one, choose the BLB because it has Bible translation options in addition to lots of extra resources. We'll be using this app every day in this study because it allows us to easily dig into the languages of the Bible (the Hebrew and Aramaic, the languages in which the Old Testament was written, and Greek, the New Testament's language).

If your eyes are glazing over and you're beginning to rethink wanting to do our study because "Whaaat? Dissecting Greek and Hebrew sounds hard / boring / not for me"—I get it. But this is something you can do! And digging into the Bible on this level is how we learn to study for ourselves and not have a faith that is spoon-fed to us. We want to make sure we are learning God's truth, right? Not just someone else's thoughts!

The BLB will rock your world if you haven't used it before. It totally changed the way I study. I'll show you really quickly how it can do the same for you. First, let's open the app and click on the search icon at the top. Let's look up something random like Psalm 23. (By the way, depending on whether you're in the app or on the website, you may want to choose a different Bible translation that better aligns with the wording we're discussing in the study—the BLB has a few different options.) Read verse 1 and see what questions come to mind. *Hmmm . . . what does it mean, I shall not want? Like, I'll literally never want for anything if the Lord is my Shepherd?*

Now this is the fun part. We can figure out what these words mean in the original language so we can better comprehend what God wants us to understand! To get there, tap the number by verse 1. On the screen that pops up, tap on *Interlinear** (we'll be using this function a lot!). On the next screen, scroll down to the phrase or word that you're wanting to dig into—in this case, *I shall not want*. You'll see that in the Hebrew the word is חָצַר or *chacer*. What does that word mean? Go ahead and click on it to find out.

On the page that pops up, you'll find all sorts of information about this word: how to say it, what part of speech it is, what its synonyms are. My favorite sections on this page are *Strong's Definitions* and the *Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon*.

Now, let's say that learning more about the word and its meaning didn't clear up our question. We've started to dig in ourselves and not simply accept someone else's explanation of a biblical passage—but since things are still a little unclear, let's head to the commentaries.

Navigate back to Psalm 23 and click on verse 1 again. This time, click on the *Text Commentaries* option. Some of my favorites in the app are by Matthew Henry and C. H. Spurgeon, but look through all of them to find which ones are most helpful to you. For the purposes of our exploration, let's tap on Spurgeon's Psalm 23 commentary. Here's my takeaway from what he wrote: "I shall not want" means I may not possess all that I wish for, but I am given a spirit of contentment. After all, does God not feed the ravens and cause the lilies to grow? I know that His grace will be sufficient for me.

Other places where you can find cross-references, commentaries, and lexicons online are Bible Hub (biblehub.com) and Bible Study Tools (biblestudytools.com). So many discoveries and insights are just a click away! When you start researching word, context, and commentaries in your study of the Bible, that is often the beginning of more questions and jumping down bunny trails of more questions

* On iPhones, this is called *Interlinear/Concordance*; to get to this function on the website, click on *Tools* next to the verse first.

and research. But you know what? The point of spending time in the Bible isn't to check off a task and move on with our day. Second Peter 3:18 says, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity."

Spending time in the Word and with the Lord is about gaining wisdom and knowledge. So if you decide to bounce around even more than I do within these pages and go down bunny trails that I have yet to discover, do it! You can spend fifteen minutes on a passage of Scripture or fifteen days, months, or years. This is all for you and your relationship with Him!

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY

Who + How

There are several ways you can engage in this study. Here are some tips for each context:

1. *Individually*: If you're doing this on your own, that's great! Write in the margins, highlight sections where God seems to want to get your attention, star things, put big question marks in areas you'd like to dig into further. Get this book messy! This study is a conversation between you and the Lord, so freewrite throughout as you really dig into all the beautiful things He wants to chat with you about!
2. *One-on-One*: We grow most in community, so find a friend who would like to do the study with you! Perhaps you'll meet together every week over coffee or lunch. Or maybe you'll meet over the phone or virtually.
3. *In-Person Group*: If you are doing this study in a group setting, such as a church Bible study or home group, still strive to be 100 percent honest and authentic in your answers. Often,

when we're with other women, we're afraid that they might judge our struggles, anger, pain, or even questions we have for or about God. But when we hide our true selves, we won't see the spiritual, emotional, and relational growth that can come out of time spent with other people who love Jesus. Of course, if the conversation dives into particular sections or questions that you don't feel ready to share publicly, give yourself permission to not answer. But if the group feels safe and supportive, I encourage you to bring all of yourself—including your messiness. And remember—even when you're in a group, make sure to invest in your daily, personal study! Coming to the group time after careful engagement with the Scripture will help everyone flourish.

For more specific directions on how to use this study as a group, head to GetWisdomBibleStudies.com to download the PDF guide. This guide will map out how to use this resource in an eight-week study and how to focus on questions and themes most beneficial for group discussion, as well as how to create and facilitate a healthy group.

4. *Virtual Group*: If you're not plugged into a group in your local context, why not start your own virtual group via Zoom, FaceTime, Skype, or another video-conference website and app? Or perhaps your friends are super busy and spread across the state or country (or world), so finding an actual day and time to meet proves difficult. If this is the case, you can start your own Facebook group, decide who will facilitate, and start chatting about what you're learning each day or each week. You and your friends can simply post whenever works best for everyone's individual schedules! Sounds fun, right?

Each day of this study can take you only twenty to thirty minutes, but if you'd like to dig deeper, you'll be learning the skills to explore

more deeply in the passage of Scripture and the context of the story. At the end of each day, you'll be prompted into a time of journaling prayer, so you can meet God with your questions, feelings of tension, and longings for growth in the places where you lead.

When + Where

Before starting this study, consider when in your day would best provide some uninterrupted time to dig in. I know finding time can be so difficult in our busy lives, thanks to jobs, kids, and other responsibilities. But we make time for the things that matter—and I promise, time meeting God through His Word is so worth it.

Personally, though I'm certainly not a morning person (hello, coffee), my brain is most attentive in the morning . . . plus, I really love having time with the Lord to center myself before the chaos of the day begins. Through the years, my family notices when I haven't done this for a few days—my joy, patience, and kindness just isn't what it usually is when I'm in the Word at the start of the day!

Simply can't get up any earlier than you currently do? Maybe you work night shifts or have little ones not yet sleeping all the way through the night. I get it, and I've been there. I still encourage you to give God the firstfruits of your time, though. Throughout the Bible, we are encouraged to give the first and best to the Lord. And though we may not have a first crop of corn or a perfect lamb to present to Him, we certainly can give Him the first of our time—not the leftovers. Even if rising earlier in the morning feels impossible in this season, you can still offer Him your firstfruits. Pack a bag with your Bible and this study and do it at the beginning of your lunch hour at work, first break between classes, or the first moments of your child's naptime. The laundry, dishes, and showering can wait. Put Him first.

What You'll Need

This study is meant both to guide you through the book of Joshua and to equip you to forge your own path through God's Word so He

can make it alive in your everyday life. As you begin your study, here are a few things to keep on hand:

- A Bible in your favorite translation
- Your phone with the Blue Letter Bible app and BibleGateway or YouVersion downloaded
- A pen (you'll find space to write as we explore the book of Joshua together, but also feel free to scribble in the margins as you need to!)
- A smartphone with internet access so you can watch the short videos that introduce each week (you can find those at GetWisdomBibleStudies.com).
- A place without distraction where you can truly dig in!

One Last Thing

A final note to remember as we go through this study: The Bible was written for us, but it's not written *to* us. The Bible is full of stories, poetry, laws, parables, and such, which were written for people who lived in a different culture thousands of years before any of us were born. So each week in this study, we're going to explore some of the behind-the-scenes aspects of Scripture. We're going to figure out the historical and cultural background. We'll try to learn the *why* of it all.

We need to become not just readers of the Word . . . but *studiers* of it. Only then can we understand what God has *for* us in His Word.

LEADING WHEREVER YOU ARE

You may be starting this study on leadership wondering if it's really for you. We so often define leaders as those charismatic people up front, the ones with all the authority . . . and it's hard to see ourselves in that. I've been there. And honestly, I didn't really mean to be a leader—it just kind of happened. I was in student-leadership through middle school, high school, and college. In my twenties, I had a job

where people worked under me and sought me for decisions and encouragement. And now I'm a parent of these little humans who need me to lead their hearts well and teach so many things that sometimes it makes my head spin.

Maybe you lead people in school, in church, or in the workplace. Perhaps you're like me and have children whose lives need to be guided in a variety of ways. Leadership is influence, pure and simple—not a role, not a title, but rather those places and ways where we are given the privilege of having a voice. That means in your family, in your friendships, in your work, in your church—wherever you have a voice, wherever you have the opportunity to influence perspective and conversations, you're leading. Whatever stage you're in and in whatever capacity you lead, *you are leading*—and I bet you want to do it in a way that influences those around you in a God-honoring way.

As I look back, I've seen how God has orchestrated my leadership growth. Little by little, He's given me more responsibility as I've grown in passion and understanding. I haven't always led well—in fact, I still don't always lead well. But I've found that leaning on His guidance and the wisdom of leaders who have gone before me is a crucial part of the growth process.

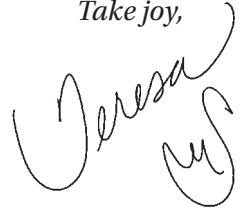
Although there are countless books out there on leadership (and my shelves are filled with them!), my favorite place to learn about how to lead (and how not to lead) is in the Bible. And the life of one Old Testament man in particular is brimming over with leadership lessons.

After Moses died, Joshua took over leading the nation of Israel. Can you imagine being the new guy after years of leadership under such a beloved and wise man? And yet, under Joshua's leadership, millions of Jews finally left forty years of wandering in the wilderness and settled down in the richness of a land that God had promised them. As Joshua followed God's leadership, Joshua's leadership led the Israelites into a season of victory and flourishing.

Wherever we're leading and whatever our leadership looks like, we can learn from this friend of God and how he led—what he did well *and* how he could have done better. We grow as leaders when we learn from both mistakes and victories.

Ready to get started? Let's get to it!

Take joy,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Teresa" followed by a stylized flourish.



WEEK 1

Waiting and Preparation

Joshua 1-4

WEEK 1 • *Day 1*

READ EXODUS 17:8-16

Do you hate waiting as much as I do? It feels like such a waste of time, right? We're ready to get out there, to do big things! Maybe you're currently leading a small crew instead of the amazing team you'd like to have, or perhaps the only one you're leading is currently spitting up on your shoulder. But this is the first and most important lesson of leadership: We must hand over our plans to Christ to handle and remember that it is God who is the ultimate Leader. His timing is perfect, and He has a purpose in the wait: He is forming our character and making us ready for whatever He's leading us into. His goal is not for us to move into leadership quickly but rather for our hearts, characters, and circumstances to align with His will.

We see this clearly in Joshua's life: God spent many years preparing him for leadership. The reason? Preparation is vital because the quality of a leader affects the quality of all generations that follow. We see this in the life of Joshua when we meet him for the first time in Exodus 17.

1. Read Exodus 17:8-16 and rewrite the story in your own words:

Moses obviously knows Joshua well. In fact, Moses trusts the younger man's wisdom and discernment so much that he tasks Joshua with selecting warriors for battle against the Amalekites. But there's so much backstory missing here! How did Moses and Joshua first meet? How, out of all the men rescued from slavery in Egypt, did Joshua emerge as one of Moses' right-hand men? Did God nudge Moses and whisper, "I have great plans for that one" or "Hey, see that guy Josh? Take him under your wing"?

For whatever reason, we're not told those early hows and whys. But what God *did* decide to include within the pages of Scripture is this story about the Amalekites' attack.

2. Based on this first encounter with Joshua in Exodus 17, what would you assume about his character or who he is as a person? Write as many things as you can glean from this passage.

HE WAS TRUSTWORTHY

Moses selected Joshua not only as a close confidant but as someone he wanted to invest in and train up to lead the next generation. With God as his ultimate Leader, Moses kept Joshua close to him for decades, teaching him all the while.

Developing the next generation is one of the most important aspects of leadership. How many times have we seen an organization

flourish until the CEO leaves or the pastor steps down? As leaders, we need to make sure we're not so focused on success that we forget to raise up the next generation to take our place.

How do we do this? As we consider the beginnings of Joshua's leadership, being mentored and raised up by Moses, we have to consider this aspect of being a leader, because it serves as the foundation for everything we're going to see from Joshua in this study. And we should also consider what else the Bible has to say about training leaders to help us understand God's heart for this crucial part of leadership.

In the book of 2 Timothy, Paul is instructing Timothy to share the gospel with the next generation. His advice to Timothy provides us with some great insights about what it looks like to mentor other leaders.

3. Read 2 Timothy 2:14-26. What are Paul's instructions, and why are they important for leadership?

| VERSE | INSTRUCTION | IMPORTANCE FOR LEADERSHIP |
|-------------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| 2 Timothy 2:14 | | |
| 2 Timothy 2:15 | | |
| 2 Timothy 2:16-18 | | |
| 2 Timothy 2:22 | | |
| 2 Timothy 2:25-26 | | |

Another key part of raising up leaders (and being raised up as a leader) is spending extended time *with each other*, and we see this as well in the relationship between Moses and Joshua. We know that Moses trusted Joshua in battle. We also learn several chapters later that Joshua was hand-selected to go up the mountain with Moses when God gave the Ten Commandments (Exodus 24).

Let's dig a little deeper into this part of Joshua's leadership journey. Read Exodus 33:7-11, paying special attention to verse 11.

4. What was the purpose of the tent of meeting?

5. What did Moses do within the tent?

6. What does verse 11 say about Joshua? What do you think he experienced?

Neither Exodus 24 nor 33 outright say that Joshua stood (or lay prostrate in overwhelming worship!) while witnessing Moses and God's conversations atop Mount Sinai and inside the tent of meeting. However, knowing that Joshua was Moses' assistant (Exodus 24:13), seemingly a constant at his side from a young age (Numbers 11:28), we might deduce from these passages that Joshua was given the great honor of being a fly on the wall during many times when God's presence was shown.

Can you even believe that? God gave this young man insight that only Moses had, allowing him to be in His supreme presence. Even if no one caught wind of it until decades later, God knew Joshua was being prepared to lead.



How do you feel about your current season of leadership? What preparation are you sensing from the Lord? Write out a prayer to Him in the space below or in a separate prayer journal. Tell Him what you're hoping to get out of this study. Ask Him to guide your heart to the places He'd like you to grow.

Amen.

WEEK 1 • Day 2



READ JOSHUA 1

Years ago, I worked for a company whose leaders wanted all of us to know our *why*: *Why do we want to succeed? Why do we want to be different from everyone else? What will keep us going when we're weary and tired? What will give us the encouragement to continue? What drives*

us? Who are we doing it all for? I hear this mentality within the walls of exercise classes, too: Why will we keep fighting when we're so tired we can hardly breathe? Why will we go the extra mile? What will make us power through?

Why is the foundation of everything we do—in our relationships, our work, and our leadership. So what is our *why*?

In leadership, we must ask ourselves *why* so we hold on to our values, mission, and goals. As Daniel Goleman says in his *New York Times* bestselling book *Primal Leadership*, “Visionary leaders help people to see how their work fits into the big picture, lending people a clear sense not just that what they do matters, but also why.”¹

1. As you think about your own life and leadership, what is *your why*?
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-
-

Joshua knew his *why*. He knew what mattered most. He understood the importance of clinging to his purpose.

In Deuteronomy 34, Moses has died, and Joshua has stepped into leadership. Verse 9 tells us that “Joshua son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him. The People of Israel listened obediently to him and did the same as when GOD had commanded Moses” (MSG). As we enter the book of Joshua, we’re going to find out more about Joshua’s purpose in this new leadership role. If you haven’t already, read Joshua 1.

2. In this passage, what do you see as Joshua’s *why* in leadership?
-

Joshua had been well prepared for his new role as leader. He had been in training for years, his predecessor (Moses) blessed him in taking the position, and God affirmed this to be His will. Even so, stepping into shoes as large as Moses' had to have been intimidating.

But do you know what Moses said to God in Exodus 3 and 4 when the Lord first asked him to lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt? Four times Moses questioned God's calling, even asking Him to send someone else! He, too, was afraid of his assignment from God because it felt big, and he felt small and inadequate.

3. How did God respond to Moses in Exodus 4:14-17?

4. What did God say to Joshua in Joshua 1:1-9? Why do you think His response to Joshua was different?

Though the Israelites believed in and supported him, Joshua was still scared and intimidated—and he stepped into the calling anyway. Unlike Moses, Joshua didn't come up with a whole bunch of excuses about why he wasn't the man for the job. He didn't try to put his calling onto someone else.

God doesn't expect us to run headfirst into monumental roles without a bit of trepidation. He understands that sometimes we move forward even when we feel weak and inadequate. But as we see in Joshua 1, God honors our obedience when we're feeling timid and nervous and yet still buck up and do scary things.

Throughout history, we can see leaders who had no idea what they were doing and yet continued forward anyway. They were in a

whole new situation, had no clue what was ahead, and still followed their calling. An executive coach my husband meets with told him that most executives, presidents, CEOs, and men and women in significant leadership positions often feel like frauds. They feel as if someone will “find out the truth” that they’re out of their depth and don’t belong in the position after all.

Don’t we all feel that sometimes? When I first came home from the hospital with a tiny baby in my arms, I realized I had *no* clue how to be a mother. I had read all the books and could spout facts from all the websites, and yet once I had the responsibility in real life, it felt so very different and scary.

I felt the same when I wrote my first book, when I started my own business, when God asked me to start working with the women’s ministry at my church. Every new step of leadership we take can make us feel supremely unqualified. But we can grasp tightly to what we know from the book of Acts:

When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.

ACTS 4:13, NIV

Jesus is with us, and because of that, we can do big things. We may be freaking out because an opportunity is new and scary, but when we know we’re walking in alignment with His will, we can step out with confidence.

5. Reflect on an experience when you were frightened or apprehensive about doing something new and yet did it anyway. What did God teach you in that time?
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Fear undermines our calling, making us question whether we can really do what God asked us to do—or whether we even heard Him ask us in the first place. When the voice of fear tries to deter us from where God is leading, we need to remember that we’re actually hearing someone else’s voice. Jennie Allen spoke about this in her book *Nothing to Prove*:

If I were your enemy, this is what I would do:

Make you believe you need permission to lead.

Make you believe you are helpless.

Make you believe you are insignificant.²

As Jennie noted, our enemy—Satan—pulls us off course, away from our *why*. He uses things like distraction, desire for comfort, questions about our identity, comparison, and suffering. We overcome fear when we push away his voice and keep our eyes and ears tuned to our heavenly Father. That’s what Joshua did. He didn’t allow any feelings of insignificance, of feeling overwhelmed or out of his depth, to turn his face away from his important *why*. Instead, it was his driving force to continue stepping forward.

6. Looking at Joshua 1, we can see that Joshua knew his why: to follow God wherever and however He called Joshua and the people of Israel. How do you think this understanding equipped Joshua to move forward in his calling, even though he was a bit scared?

Often God equips us to move through our fear by giving us direction for what it looks like to move into our *why*. We see that in Joshua 1: God did more than simply seek to reassure the new leader of the Israelites; He also gave him marching orders, six direct conditions for his success.

I love when someone tells me $a + b = c$, don't you? Some of the stress and mystery goes away when I'm told that doing something will likely cause a specific other thing to happen. For example, when I was in sales and learned that it takes six to eight touch points to generate a viable prospect, I felt less pressure over not closing after one or two meetings.

The amazing thing, though, is that God doesn't give Joshua a strategy that *might* improve his chances of success—He lays out six things that *will* equal success. If Joshua does what God says, he *will* attain what he's set out to accomplish.

7. Let's dig in a bit more into what God told Joshua in Joshua 1:1-9. What are the six directives God gave to ensure successfully taking the land of Canaan?

- 1 (verse 7): _____
- 2 (verse 7): _____
- 3 (verse 7): _____

- 4 (verse 8): _____
- 5 (verse 8): _____
- 6 (verse 8): _____

These six commands are all in a similar vein. God is essentially telling Joshua to trust Him and pursue relationship with Him above all else. None of us can live in alignment with God without pursuing relationship with Him. When we pursue Him, our trust in Him will grow. Joshua couldn't lead well without fully trusting and obeying God's plan. The same is true for us.

Now, it's important to remember that the directives God gave Joshua were a promise for him and no one else. He was the leader of the Israelites, and this vow was between him and the Creator of the universe. This being said, each of the principles listed will certainly bring us into closer relationship with our God. Everything in the Bible loops back around to teach us about who God is, and one thing that's clear about His character is that He wants a close relationship with us. I see three main ways we can translate these principles through that lens: recognize, repeat, and reciprocate.

- **Recognize:** God told Joshua to carefully observe the whole instruction that Moses received, making sure he understood the law given to his predecessor. We can translate this into our own lives by being scripturally literate. As Beth Moore once said, "You and I can't fulfill our calling without being in the Scriptures."³ We need to know who God is and how He calls us to follow Him—and we cannot do that without being in His Word constantly and consistently, "meditat[ing] on it day and night" (Joshua 1:8).
- **Repeat:** Joshua needed to practice the Word of God in both his personal and public lives. He needed to use it while leading the nation and himself so he would not "turn . . . to the right

or to the left” (Joshua 1:7, NIV). As a soldier, Joshua would have known this instruction as a strict rule of war, one he likely recited often to his men.⁴ None of us is perfect, but when we practice the Word of God in all aspects of our lives, we also won’t tend to veer to the right or to the left, losing focus on how God has called us to lead (see Psalm 119:105).

- **Reciprocate:** As Joshua received wisdom and direction from the Lord, he also needed to share it with his people, communicating God’s love and plan for them. Joshua 1:8 shares that he was to “let the words from the book of the law be always on [his] lips” (VOICE)—to remind the Israelites that God was with them wherever they went, whatever they did. In the same way, we should know the Bible well enough that when certain situations arise, we’re able to quickly remember God’s assurances from His Word. When fear overtakes us, we may think of John 14:27. When we don’t understand a season we’re going through, we recite Proverbs 3:5-6. When we are weary and heavyhearted, we may think immediately of Matthew 11:28.

My peace is the legacy I leave to you. I don't give gifts like those of this world. Do not let your heart be troubled or fearful.

JOHN 14:27, VOICE

⁵ *Place your trust in the Eternal; rely on Him completely; never depend upon your own ideas and inventions.*

⁶ *Give Him the credit for everything you accomplish, and He will smooth out and straighten the road that lies ahead.*

PROVERBS 3:5-6, VOICE

Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

MATTHEW 11:28, VOICE

8. What are some ways you can apply these three principles in your own life?
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If we are to be women who “lead out” and lead *well*, then we should be women who know, practice, and pass on God’s Word—not just His commandments but His many promises throughout Scripture. Whether in the workplace or with our families, being able to lead from the perspective of the Bible is paramount.

The Bible is rich with encouragement, direction, and hope, and even though it wasn’t written *to* us, God has given it *for* us. If you’re in need of perspective or insight as you press into your *why*, or if you’re asking God for growth in a particular area, flip to the back of your Bible for the concordance or topical index to find passages that connect with what you’re going through (and if you don’t have one at your fingertips, you can always google “verses about _____”). Select a verse and resolve to commit it to memory this week. Let God’s words pour over you and give you confidence in your purpose as He brings His truth from head knowledge to heart knowledge.



Write your selected verse here. Ask God to make your *why* clear and help you lead into it out of the abundance of His Word.

Amen.

WEEK 1 • *Day 3*

READ JOSHUA 2

As leaders, many times we will find ourselves going against the status quo. We'll face moments where we'll need to hold our ground, though people might shun us. We've seen this happen in movies. We've read it in books. Maybe we've even been that person, the one who grits their teeth and presses on even when friends, coworkers, or family members disagree—because light needs to be shed on truth.

We're not talking about arrogance here. This is a grave discernment process. When we lead well, we'll very likely come to places where we must stick a flag into the ground because it's the right thing. Often, listening to the wisdom of others is the best thing we can do, but leading means also being willing to stand against the majority opinion as we prayerfully align with God's Word and the Holy Spirit's promptings.

Many years prior to becoming leader of the Israelites, Joshua was put into this position. Numbers 13–14 recounts the story: God requested that Moses send out twelve men to secretly scout out the land He was giving them. Moses instructed them,

¹⁷⁻²⁰ Go up through the Negev and then into the hill country. Look the land over, see what it is like. Assess the people: Are they strong or weak? Are there few or many? Observe the land: Is it pleasant or harsh? Describe the towns where they live: Are they open camps or fortified with walls? And the soil: Is it fertile or barren? Are there forests? And try to bring back a sample of the produce that grows there—this is the season for the first ripe grapes.

NUMBERS 13:17-20, MSG

What these men discovered was that the land was, indeed, full of “milk and honey,” just as God had promised (Exodus 3:8). But they also discovered something else: that the land was inhabited, and the people there were strong and powerful (Numbers 13:25-33). Only Caleb stood against the tide of opinion, advocating for the people to continue into the Promised Land (Numbers 13:30).

1. Flip over to Numbers 14:1-5. What happened next?

2. In the midst of this response, what did Joshua do? (See Numbers 14:6-9.)

Joshua and Caleb were the only spies who returned still believing in God’s promise to bring them into this lush and beautiful land. There were giants, yes. There were fortified cities and warriors to get through, yes. They weren’t naive—they knew taking the land would be difficult and would take time. But never once did they stray from believing that God would provide. God honored their trust in Him: They got to enter the Promised Land while the rest of the generation brought out from Egypt died in the wilderness.

Our lack of trust has consequences, and the Israelites learned this lesson too late. God had shown Himself over and over to His people: through opening the Red Sea, dropping manna from the sky to feed them, letting water miraculously flow from a rock. These people saw

a cloud of smoke guide them during the day and a pillar of fire guide them by night. Over and over, God miraculously provided, yet when a difficulty stood in their way, they gave up. Some even demanded a new leader and said they should return to Egypt!

Joshua stood up for what he believed, and years later, as he led the next generation of God's people, he sent two spies to search the land again. This time, however, he sent them to spy on a specific city.

3. Read Joshua 2:1-2 and briefly recap below:

Who's scratching their head in confusion? One second Joshua is sending out these two men, and the next second they're hiding in Rahab's home. Maybe they saw they were being followed and entered the first unlocked door. Since we're told Rahab was a prostitute, they may have picked her home because two strange men entering there wouldn't be unusual. Most likely, though, her residence was also an inn. All we really need to know is that God led them to the place He knew they would be safe.

4. Rahab is a woman whose past seemed to define her—but that past is not the reason she is remembered today. After reading Joshua 2, what words would you use to describe her?

Setting aside shame and any preconceived notions these men might have, Rahab was brave and bold, and she led her family to safety because she believed in a God she had only heard about. We

learn in Joshua 6:22-25 that she and her family were protected by and lived among the Israelites—and Hebrews 11:31 honors her specifically for her faith, including her among other amazing God lovers like Abraham, Joseph, and Moses.

5. James 2:25 also talks about Rahab; look at verses 24 and 26, specifically. Why do you think these two verses bookend the passage about Rahab?
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6. Think about Rahab's boldness. Would you have had the faith to do what she did for the spies?
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Let's dig a little deeper into what James says about Rahab. James 2:24 tells us that someone is justified by works and not by faith alone, and he uses Rahab as an example of this. But what does *works* mean?

Often when I'm wanting to really comprehend Scripture, I'll dive into the Greek and Hebrew (the languages the Bible was originally written in) because the words used in the translation I'm reading aren't helping me fully understand what a passage is trying to say. Let's open our Blue Letter Bible app and see what we can find out about the word *works*.

7. Tap on verse 25, and click on *Interlinear*. What is the Greek word listed for *works*?
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When we click on *ergon* in the *Interlinear*, we discover that the Greek word for works comes from the word *ergō*, which means “to work.” Other definitions show us that *ergon* is “any thing accomplished.”⁵ When I look in the HELPS Word-studies on Bible Hub, I also find that the term *ergon* can be translated as “a deed (action) that carries out (completes) an *inner desire* (intension, purpose).”⁶

Okay—so what’s the point? This verse is not implying that deeds (or works) are how we become a Christian or that we get to heaven simply by being a good person. What it’s explaining is that if we love God, we’ll want to do big things in His name. Remember, the term can be translated into a deed that’s carried out because of an inner desire or purpose. In other words, works are actions put forth because of someone’s *why* (like we learned about yesterday).

Rahab put her life on the line for two men she didn’t even know because her *why* was wrapped up in knowing a God she’d only heard stories about. She knew there was more to the life she lived, and she believed that the stories were true.

If Rahab acted out of faith in a God she had heard of and yet barely knew, how much more should we as both leaders and Christ-followers act in faith to protect, encourage, and help others know Him?

This leads us to something else we can learn from Rahab. Her faith in God moved her beyond the incredible shame she could have felt over her lifestyle. Sometimes we hold on to our own shame and guilt with such clenched fists that it spreads into many aspects of our lives, including our relationships with God. Too often, we’re tempted to keep God at arm’s length because of our own shame. One thing I’ve realized through the years is this: *God may have forgiven us, but sometimes we need time to forgive ourselves so we can move forward.*

Many years ago, I experienced something that I simply could not forgive myself for. I knew God had forgiven me, yet what I had done was such a big deal to me that I determined I didn’t deserve His forgiveness. I held on to a cruel amount of disgrace and contempt

for myself because of it. It took me a long time, but I eventually realized that when God says He forgives all things, He truly means it. Nothing we can do is too much for Him to handle. Nothing we can do takes us so far away from Him that He can't pull us back.

Just because Rahab had previously sold her body for money didn't mean that's where her future was headed. Rahab's life was transformed because she believed. Her life was forever altered because she acted in a bold and countercultural way. Like Joshua, she knew the truth and held tightly to it.

8. Rahab likely didn't view herself as a leader, yet she acted as one. How did she act as an audacious leader?
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Rahab may not have known the fate of her city, but because she had heard the stories about the incredible miracles of God, she trusted. She had to have known something big was going to go down (we see that in Joshua 2:12, when she asked them to spare her family!). With this knowledge, she remained grounded. She could have slipped out the window and down the rope, hiding herself away with the Israelites. She must have been at least a little bit tempted to ask the spies if she could go with them or show them where to hide, rather than simply tell them where they should go (Joshua 2:16). But she was willing to ride out the devastation she knew would befall her city because she trusted that God would protect them.

Do you know how Rahab's story played out? We'll talk more in the next few days about what happened in Jericho, but while we're spending this time with Rahab, let's find out what ultimately

happened to her. Flip quickly over to Matthew 1. Verse 1 says, “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.” Scan down to verses 5 and 6 to find out something incredible.

9. Who was Salmon married to?

10. Who was Salmon’s son?

11. Whom did Salmon’s son marry and have a child with?

Rahab married an Israelite man, and later another incredible woman of bold faith named Ruth also entered Rahab’s family line. This family grew to include King David and culminated in Jesus Christ Himself. This woman with a tarnished reputation was not only forgiven but entered a new life where she became part of the grand story of God’s redemption of humanity. It’s amazing what can happen when we step out boldly, isn’t it?



Spend some time in prayer with the Lord. How might God be asking you to step out boldly this week?

Amen.

WEEK 1 • Day 4



READ JOSHUA 3

After hiding in the hill country for three days, as Rahab had advised, the spies finally made it back to camp safely. Joshua 2 wrapped up as these two men reported back to Joshua: “The LORD has handed over the entire land to us. Everyone who lives in the land is also panicking because of us” (verse 24, CSB).

Joshua must have breathed a big sigh of relief. He might have been unsure about what the men would say when they returned. Would they be weakhearted like the ten men he and Caleb had searched the land with thirty-eight years prior, or would they stand firm in the knowledge that God was indeed with them and would carry out His promise? Joshua now had his answer. I can imagine a smile spreading over his face as he approached his people with these words: “Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you” (Joshua 3:5).

“Tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you.” The thought sends chills up my spine. Can you imagine the emotions the Israelites felt? Can you just hear the whoops and hollers? The cheers, tears, and celebratory whistles? What a difference from the crowd that had tried to stone Joshua and Caleb all those years before! The people knew there would be obstacles and hardships along the way, yet their enthusiasm grew with the confidence of their leader.

1. Joshua was a motivational leader, unifying the people around a common goal.⁷ As you lead, what can you do to inspire and unify those within your circle?
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One thing I’ve noticed about Joshua so far is that he remains upbeat in the face of difficult things—the death of Moses, the intense pressure of the role he now holds. Even though he felt inadequate and scared, it seems that God was the only one who noticed his inner turmoil, because God sees the whole of who we are, including the portions we don’t share outwardly. Joshua took his fears to God and led the people with optimism and vision, and in doing so, he created “an environment of trust [and] comfort.”⁸ Thanks to Joshua’s trustworthy and steady leadership, the people were ready to respond in faith and action when the two spies brought their report.

That optimism and trust would prove increasingly necessary as they moved toward Jericho. Joshua knew the Israelites would somehow be victorious in their battle of Jericho, but he also knew that something large and deep lay in the way of that victory: the Jordan River.

2. When something huge and difficult looms in the way of God's promise or calling in your life, how do you initially respond? Circle as many as apply, and use the blanks to add your own words if necessary:

frustrated

worried

hopeful

at peace

heavyhearted

angry

scared

distrustful

excited about what God will do

resentful

confident

As the Israelites looked toward Jericho, the Jordan River was in its springtime flood season.⁹ This massive body of water—about the width of a football field—flowed around ten miles an hour during this time of year.¹⁰ Mothers likely drew their children close as they watched the fast pace of the water and contemplated the danger of the undercurrent. How would they cross the wild, raging waters before them? Would God part it as He'd done with the Red Sea so many years ago?

All they knew was what God had told Joshua:

As for you, command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant, "When you come to the brink of the waters of the Jordan, you shall stand still in the Jordan."

JOSHUA 3:8

The priests were to step out into the river in faith, holding the Ark of the Covenant atop their shoulders. They knew that “the living God [was] among [them]” (Joshua 3:10) but were required to make the first move to show God they trusted He was indeed in control.

Are we willing to step out in faith like this when we face obstacles?

My church, LIFEGATE Denver, is relatively young, and many of our founding members came from Indiana, sensing God’s call to help with this exciting church plant. My friend Joanna was one of those people. But as she applied for job after job in anticipation of the move, she constantly came up empty. It made no sense. She’s incredibly personable, smart, and educated. She had a great résumé. She was applying for a nursing job in a growing city with tons of new hospitals. There was no doubt in her mind that God had asked her to move to Colorado. So why was there this huge obstacle in her way?

Months passed. She had applied for one hundred and forty jobs. She couldn’t even find a place to live! And that’s when she sensed the Lord telling her to go anyway. Was she willing to step out in faith despite the obstacles, trusting that He would provide?

Her family and friends obviously thought this was an incredibly risky decision but still helped her load up her car for the long journey to her new city. Ten minutes after she left home, just as she pulled onto the freeway, Joanna’s phone rang. It was the HR department of a hospital in Denver, offering her a job and asking when could she start. Immediately after that conversation, her phone rang again with the news that she now had a place to live.

I know, right? Within ten minutes of stepping out in some serious faith, my sweet friend had a job and a home. I still have a hard time wrapping my mind around it! I’m not saying that God is going to part the waters within ten minutes of you stepping out, but I am saying that if He gives you an assignment or calling, He will see it through in His good and perfect way and timing!

Like Joanna, the priests faced a major hurdle. They had God’s instructions. They had the promise of victory and the accomplishment

of their goal. They knew God was with them . . . but this scary, in-between time was a mystery.

3. What were God's directions to the priests (verse 8)?

4. Why do you think He wanted them to pause and simply stand in the Jordan?

5. Open up the BLB and head to Joshua 3:8, tapping on the verse and again on *Interlinear*. Now scroll down to *you shall stand* or 'amad (אָמַד; pronounced *ah-mad*) and click on it. What do we learn from this phrase?

6. Considering what we just learned about *you shall stand*, and reading the definition below, circle the words or phrases that jump out as you contemplate these priests stepping out and standing still:

- “to stand, take one’s stand . . . present oneself, attend upon, be or become servant of”;
- “to stand still, stop (moving or doing), cease”;
- “to tarry, delay, remain . . . abide, endure”;
- “to make a stand, hold one’s ground.”¹¹

I have circled so many! What about you? *To present oneself, to abide, and to make a stand* are those that stand out the most to me (pun only slightly intended).

7. How do these definitions give you more insight into why the priests were to stand still within the violently rushing river?
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In the silence of the heart God speaks. If you face God in prayer and silence, God will speak to you. Then you will know that you are nothing. It is only when you realize your nothingness, your emptiness, that God can fill you with Himself. Souls of prayer are souls of great silence.¹²

MOTHER TERESA

Valuing stillness is difficult because we live in a culture that glorifies *busy*. But without being still, we won't be able to distinguish the voice of God over the voice of hustle and striving. Stillness, though, doesn't require inactivity. We can train for a 5K or a marathon while being still. We can wash dishes or fold laundry while being still. We can drive through traffic, paint a wall or canvas, and even floss our teeth while being still. Stillness is less about being motionless and more about the position of our hearts and minds while we're moving. Only when our hearts are still and quiet, focused on God, are we able to listen for His whispers (1 Kings 19:12).

8. What are some practical ways you can introduce stillness and quietness into your days? How might these practices affect your personal/spiritual life as well as your leadership?
-

9. Look at Joshua 3:17. What kind of ground did the priests and then all of Israel step onto? Why do you think this fact was important enough to specify?

When God takes care of us, He does it fully. He doesn't do things halfway, and He doesn't do it so it's "good enough." The Lord not only split the waters to provide the Israelites with safe passage but He dried the ground beneath their feet as a reminder that He cares about even the most minute details of our lives.



As we end our time together today, spend some time with the Lord in prayer, reflecting on how He has provided for you in both the big picture and the tiny details. He truly cares about what you care about . . . because He loves you.

Amen.

WEEK 1 • Day 5



READ JOSHUA 4

Two generations ago, my family got on a boat in Sweden and headed for Ellis Island, planning to serve as missionaries with the Salvation Army in the United States. My dad's aunt Dagmar got appendicitis on the ship and almost died. As soon as the ship arrived in New York, she and my great-grandmother were whisked off to the hospital. When the rest of the family exited immigration, they had no idea where little Dagmar and their mom had been taken. How terrifying that would have been—in a completely unfamiliar place, unable to speak much English, not knowing where your family was. As I recall, it took them two days to track down their lost loved ones.

I love stories from my family's history, but as years have lunged forward, the details of the Swanstrom family's early years in this beautiful country have begun to fade. It's that way for so many of us, isn't it? Memories fade, details diminish, and reality dims as time moves on. We take DNA tests and explore websites like ancestry.com, all in search of the stories and meaning beyond our time. We long to remember our *why* because understanding where we started, what people and events and truths helped create that *why*, equips us to step forward into it.

For the Israelites, remembering where they came from and how they got to the Promised Land was crucial as they fought for their

place as a distinct people after hundreds of years of slavery. Back in Deuteronomy, Moses issued a warning about this very thing:

When GOD, your God, ushers you into the land he promised through your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to give you, you're going to walk into large, bustling cities you didn't build, well-furnished houses you didn't buy, come upon wells you didn't dig, vineyards and olive orchards you didn't plant. When you take it all in and settle down, pleased and content, make sure you don't forget how you got there—GOD brought you out of slavery in Egypt.

DEUTERONOMY 6:10-12, MSG

When we've finally arrived where God's been leading us, we can't forget how we got there. In other words—we cannot forget our *why*.

Today in Joshua, we see this leader reaffirming the importance of remembering God's work. Let's pick up where we left off yesterday.

1. Before the priests ever stepped foot in the Jordan, God gave Joshua some very specific instructions for after they crossed. What were they? (Hint: See Joshua 3:12.)

Hmm. All God tells them to do is select twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one man from each tribe. If you're like me, you might be wondering, *Where's the rest of the information?*

2. Why might God have not disclosed more of the plan?
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Once again, Joshua and the Israelites were to trust. God would eventually shed light on the purpose behind choosing these twelve individuals, but for now, they didn't need to know.

3. Are you in a season where you feel like God has only shed partial light on a calling or assignment? Why do you think you might not have all the information?
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4. Once the people of Israel crossed the river safely and made it to dry ground, these twelve chosen men got more information. What did God ask them to do? (Hint: See Joshua 4:3-8.)
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The twelve men were to place twelve stones on top of each other as a symbol of the twelve tribes,¹³ because God wanted the entire family to be involved in what He was doing. He asked the whole company to come together as one and actively remember where they had come from, recognizing that *He* would bring them onward toward a fulfilled promise.

But think about this: You're walking through parted waters. The river towers high above your head. Yes, you're walking on dry ground . . . but you can still see the fish in the wall of water next to you. You can see the reeds and brush swirling around the waving waters that is often uprooted during this spring floodtime. I bet you'd hightail

your way through, right? Not that you don't trust God. He parted the waters—why would He allow them to crash on you? At least, that's what you try to remind yourself over and over as your heart beats ten thousand times per minute.

Then—*whew*—you make it to the other side. You're safe. But wait . . . what about these twelve men who were given an extra task? Can you imagine what was going through their heads?

Go back in and heave a massive stone upon my shoulder? Um, that will take a while to carry out. Deep breath. How long will it take me? Don't look at that wall of water. Exhale. Uhhhh okay, God—I really hope Joshua heard You right.

5. How can we lead in a way that develops such profound trust in the people around us?
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As they walked back onto the dry riverbed, Joshua also began setting up a set of memorial stones—in the middle of the Jordan. Joshua didn't lead from a high perch. These men trusted him because he was *with* them.

Each man completed his task and went to stand safely with the rest of the community—and as quickly as the waters had parted, the walls suddenly crashed together and reformed into a rushing river. I wonder what it was like to look at that river after walking through such a miracle. It probably felt like a dream. Maybe some shook their heads, looking at one another and whispering, *“Did that really just happen?”*

6. Have you ever experienced this kind of surreal work of God, when He showed His power and moved beyond your expectations? What did He do?
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Beneath the flowing water of the Jordan River, the pile of rocks remained. Even after things went back to “business as usual,” the core and foundation had changed. It’s the same for us. After we place the internal memorial stones of God’s work, our insides flow a bit differently.

7. How does remembering God’s work change your perspective moving forward?

The memorial stones were placed to remind future generations of God’s great power and glory. They were a testament to His faithfulness and love for His people and served as a witness to unbelievers that the Lord is mighty. Even those placed inside the Jordan would act as a visible reminder. As the waters rose and subsided throughout the years, portions of this memorial would reappear. And parents and grandparents would tell their children the story of God’s gracious provision.

As we wrap up today, I want to point out the last verse in our chapter because it talks about fear. I bet the Israelites swallowed down a massive amount of fear while walking through the Jordan, but why is it saying that we should fear God forever?

So that all the peoples of the earth may know that the hand of the LORD is mighty, that you may **fear** the LORD your God forever.

JOSHUA 4:24, EMPHASIS ADDED

The Hebrew word for fear used here is *yare*’ (יָרֵא; pronounced *yah-ray*). Now here’s the thing—I’m fairly certain this verse isn’t telling us to shake in terror at our Lord God. Terror doesn’t seem in line with His love for us and His longing to be loved in return, right?

8. Head to Joshua 4:24 in the BLB, tapping on the verse and then again on *Interlinear*. Now scroll down to *that you may fear or yare'* (אָרֵא). After reading through the *Interlinear* section (and even the lexicons, if you want), please pen down the words or phrases that jump out at you.
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9. If you were to rewrite Joshua 4:24 in your own words, changing the word *fear* (*yare'*) to a more literal translation, how would you rewrite it?
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That makes *so* much more sense, doesn't it? This is why we reverence the original language (Hebrew in the Old Testament, Greek in the New Testament). If we hadn't dug into this Scripture the way we did, we might go away from today scratching our heads and making the serious mistake that we should be fearful of our heavenly Father, thinking He is a scary God. But no part of Him should fill us with dread or terror. Instead, we should have a healthy respect for Him. A reverence for the One who created the universe and all that is within it.

Think about it . . . if our God wants to fill our hearts full of panic and dread, then how could He be Someone who is full of mercy, grace, and love? How could He be a God who forgives us over and over and over? If we look at it this way, He simply cannot be a God we should be terrified of, right? That would be against His very character.

We read in 1 Corinthians 14:33 that “God is not a God of confusion but of peace.” Peace translates to security, safety, and

harmony—and we cannot have a God of fear if He is a God of peace.
Let's rest in our trust in Him today.



When has God met you with peace in the midst of fear?
Bring that remembrance before Him and thank Him for His
faithfulness.

Amen.

