

Lesson 9

“Choose This Day”

Joshua 21-24

Can I Really Live the Abundant Life?

As we come to the close of our study and of Joshua, you may be wondering, *can I really live the abundant life? Is it even possible to be free of all this stuff that I carry around? What sort of a mindset does it take to get completely out of the wilderness and into the Promised Land?*

Embedded in the middle of the book of Joshua is a shining star who exemplified what it takes. His name was Caleb. We first met Caleb back in Numbers 13. He was one of the original twelve spies sent by Moses to scout out the Promised Land. All of the spies brought back a glowing report about the fabulous, fruitful land. But ten were totally intimidated by the strong giants who lived there. They persuaded the people that it would be impossible to conquer the land, so they should stay in the wilderness. Caleb and Joshua stood against the majority, believing that God would give them the land:

The land which we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. If the Lord is pleased with us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it to us – a land which flows with milk and honey. Only do not rebel against the Lord; and do not fear the people of the land, for they shall be our prey. Their protection has been removed from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them.
(Numbers 14:7-9)

This was to no avail. The Israelites literally wanted to stone them. They refused to take the Promised Land and, instead, received forty years of wandering in the wilderness. Caleb had a promise from God to cling to though: “My servant Caleb, because he has had a different spirit and has followed Me fully, I will bring into the land which he entered, and his descendants shall take possession of it” (Numbers 14:24).

“I would have despaired unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the LORD In the land of the living.”

Psalm 27:13

Review the conclusion of Caleb’s story in Joshua 14 and 15:13-19.

1. What strikes you about Caleb from this passage?

2. How might the lives of Joshua and Caleb personify Psalm 27:13?

3. *Do you want the Lord to say of you, “She has a different spirit, she has followed me fully”? Take some time to write out a prayer to the Lord asking Him to do this work in your life.*

Caleb was not like all the rest. He had a different spirit, a different heart attitude. He actually believed God. He took Him at His word and acted on it. Caleb is a wonderful example for each one of us. Even at eight-five years old he was eager to move into the promises of God and to fight for his inheritance. Three times in the scriptures it says that Caleb followed the Lord God of Israel fully. The land that he asked for was populated by perhaps the fiercest of all the enemy in Canaan, the Anakim, but that did not deter him. “I shall drive them out as the Lord has spoken” (Joshua 14:12).

Caleb waited all those years through the misery of the wilderness, and when it was time to possess the land, he was ready. Not only did he see the promises of God in the land of the living, but he left a wonderful spiritual and physical legacy to his descendants. Caleb is our model. We just need to go for it like he did.

God of Second Chances

Caleb went after God with his whole heart. He is inspiring! But for some of us, his example can bring discouragement because we have made a mess of our lives. We feel like we have already made so many mistakes that we might as well just quit. Is that you? Do you feel like you have disqualified yourself and that you are stuck with the consequences of your choices? Does the enemy whisper, “Who do you think you are to call yourself a follower of Jesus? Why don't you just give up?”

I know a woman who made some really unwise choices. She ran off with another man, leaving her husband and two small children. This new man also left his wife and small children, so their choices affected many souls. She was headstrong and stubborn. No one could talk her out of finding “happiness.” She recklessly pursued her agenda, until she woke up miserable about six months into her new marriage. Her heart ached for her children. She saw what she had done, and she was so sorry, but it was too late to change anything. She cried out to God from the depths of her heart.

There is a similar story in the book of Joshua that contrasts the legacy of two of the tribes of Israel: the Simeonites and the Levites. As young men Simeon and Levi behaved recklessly and immorally. In Genesis 34 they massacred all the males of Shechem in retaliation for the rape of their sister Dinah. Because of their actions, they were disqualified from their inheritance. On his deathbed, Jacob delivered a scathing review of his eldest sons in Genesis 49:5-7. He refused to bless them, instead pronouncing a curse upon them – that they would be dispersed and scattered throughout Israel. Five hundred years later, this prophecy was fulfilled when the Land of Milk and Honey was divided among the tribes of Israel.

These two brothers received the exact same pronouncement. However, the stories of their tribes played out differently over the years. Simeon and the Simeonites chose to remain in bitterness, and as a result, when it came time to divide the land, the curse was fulfilled; they were given bits of land scattered throughout that of the other tribes (Joshua 19:1-9).

The Levites chose another path.

4. What do the Levites do in Exodus 32:22-26?

Because of the repentance and obedience of the Levites, their very curse became a blessing. The Levites became the tribe of priests; they were given the privilege of caring for the Tabernacle and of serving the Lord. Instead of land, the Levites received the Lord Himself (Numbers 18:20-21). When they were off-duty, they

returned to their homes throughout the land, taking with them the joy and glory of having been with the Lord. The curse was still fulfilled – they were still scattered throughout Israel, but the curse was transformed into a blessing for the Levites and for all of Israel (Joshua 21:2).



When my friend called out to the Lord from a repentant heart, the Lord spoke into her spirit, "I will not change the path that you have chosen, but I am going to walk with you every step of the way." And He has. He has taken the broken pieces of her life and put them back together again. He has brought her and many of her loved ones to Himself in salvation. He is glorified in her life.

This is an important principle for us if we are going to live in the Land of Milk and Honey. Whenever we sin, there will be consequences, but we must not stay stuck in our sins. Instead, when we turn back to the Lord and confess our sin, God forgives our sin and redeems even our consequences. He may not change our consequences, but He *redeems* them.

5. What is promised to believers in Romans 8:28? Write the verse under the key in the margin

We may still face the earthly repercussions and consequences of our sin, but when we confess it to the Lord, He delights in being the God of second chances.

6. *Ask your Counselor, the Holy Spirit if there is any sin in your life that you haven't confessed to the Lord. If so, take some time now to deal with it before the Lord. Watch to see how He will redeem your situation and change what could be a curse into a blessing in your life and in the lives of those around you.*

Romans 8:28



"Some boast in chariots and some in horses, But we will boast in the name of the LORD, our God."

Psalm 20:7

Complete Victory, Complete Reliance

As we think back over what we have learned from the book of Joshua, we see that the Lord never underestimates the obsession that the enemy has with keeping us out of the Promised Land.

7. From Joshua 17:18, how does the Lord size up the enemy's ability?

8. What words describe the attitude that Joshua was to have toward his enemy?

The enemy of our souls is never going to change. He is not going to relent. He will not surrender. He will always tempt us to turn from the Lord and go our own way. The enemy will also tempt us to rely upon ourselves and the ways of the world. He is going to try to bring discouragement to get us to give up. If we are going to live the abundant life, we will have to persevere.

9. What did God command the Israelites to do in Joshua 11:6?

This command may seem extreme, but it underscores the lengths to which we must go if we are going to win complete victory over the enemy. In the Bible, chariots and horses are typically symbolic of self-reliance because they allow man to accomplish things apart from God. If these resources had fallen into Joshua and company's hands, they may have become self-reliant. They would not have needed to depend upon the Lord for their victory.

10. *How does Psalm 20:7 sum this up? Personalize this Psalm, changing the words so that it fits your life.*

I used to read the Gospels and wonder at the amount of demonic involvement that the Lord encountered during His life on the earth. Approximately one-third of His healing involved demonic activity. Again and again, one of His clear instructions to the disciples was to cast out demons. I questioned why there was so much in that day, when we seldom hear about it today. Our pastors and Bible teachers rarely even mention it. Did all the demons retire after Jesus died?

I have come to believe not only that the demons have not retired, but also that their activity is increasing as they see the day of the Lord (and their subsequent complete defeat) drawing near. Fully experiencing the abundant life in the Land of Milk and Honey will be impossible until the enemy is completely defeated in our lives.

I want to be clear: a believer cannot be possessed by demons. We have the Holy Spirit living in our spirits. We cannot be possessed, but we can be hassled and influenced by demons.

There are several ways we open ourselves up to this influence: refusing to forgive, refusing to repent of sin (including immorality and occult involvement), and believing a lie of the enemy and living our lives based on that lie. When we participate in any of these things, we are placing ourselves in the enemy's territory where he can influence and hassle us. Throughout this book we have been reclaiming places in our lives that we had ceded to the enemy. It is now time to kick him out for good.

Look back over each chapter of this book and make sure you have prayed through the prayers and issues that we have discussed. As we prayed through these issues, we were getting cleaned up and on the path of righteousness. The influence of the enemy is lessening in our lives, but we may still see areas in our lives that are driven by compulsion, not led by peace. We continue to fall into certain sins even though our desire is to please the Lord. Whenever you sense that you need a more complete victory over the enemy, it is time for prayer. You may want to meet with a trusted friend or prayer counselor for this.

11. Ask the Lord to identify any area of your life where you need freedom from the oppression of the enemy. This may be a particular sin that you easily fall into, or an attitude that you know does not please the Lord. Take some time to listen to the Lord. Write down anything that He brings up. (These notes are for your eyes only - you will not be asked to share it.)

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- ❖ *Renounce the attitudes and sins by name, placing them under the blood of the Lord Jesus.*
 - ❖ *Confess these sins and attitudes to the Lord and receive His forgiveness (1 John 1:8-9).*
 - ❖ *Based on the authority of the Lord Jesus over the enemy (Matthew 28:18-19) and your identity with Him, in the Name of Jesus Christ bind all demons at work in your life. Tell them to leave and go to the place where the Lord Jesus sends them.*
 - ❖ *Ask the Lord to fill you anew with the Holy Spirit and to reclaim all ground that was lost to the enemy.*
 - ❖ *Thank the Lord for His work of releasing you from the work of the enemy.*
 - ❖ *Stand firm in the freedom of the Lord.*

Choose This Day

Through our time together meditating on the book of Joshua and applying its spiritual applications to our lives, we have tasted the milk and honey of the Promised Land. Forgiven by our heavenly Father, healed by the Holy Spirit, delivered by the power of Christ's blood, we are experiencing the abundant life that Jesus offers! But before we close the book of Joshua, there is one final challenge we must address.

Read Joshua 23-24.

Twenty-seven years had passed since the Israelites entered the Promised Land. Joshua was an old man, but he had one more thing to work out with his people before he died. He gathered the leaders of the Israelites together and addressed them.

12. From Joshua 23, which of the commands that Joshua gave to the elders stand out and speak to you in your life today?

After addressing the elders, Joshua called together all of Israel at Shechem for his final address.

13. What did Joshua remind the Israelites of in Joshua 24:2-14?

The track record of God's faithfulness to the Israelites is astounding! But they aren't the only ones who have a track record. Each one of us has a story of God's faithfulness as well.

14. What are some ways that God has shown His faithfulness to you throughout the weeks of our study?



"If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Joshua 24:15

You have a story! Each one of us does. Some may be more dramatic than others, but we all have stories that bring praise and honor to the Lord and bring stability and encouragement to us. Write down answers to prayers and times when the Lord shows you His faithfulness. And then, don't be afraid to share your story. It may be exactly the encouragement someone needs!

Joshua's Challenge

Joshua set before the Israelites a choice: "Choose for yourselves today whom you will serve" (Joshua 24:15). It is a very clear choice, and there is no neutral ground. It is an either/or proposition. Notice God doesn't force Himself on us. We must choose for ourselves. He proves that He is trustworthy and faithful, and then He asks us to decide for ourselves whom we will serve.

Throughout this study, we have seen Joshua and many other Israelites choose to serve the Lord. We witnessed Joshua and Caleb remain faithful when they could have chosen bitterness during the forty years in the wilderness as they suffered the consequences of others' sin. When called upon by God to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land, Joshua's response was a resounding, "Yes!" Rahab chose to say yes to the God of Israel, risking her life to save the two spies. She moved out of a life of idolatry into the royal bloodline of Christ. Through a series of battles, the Israelites learned to rely on the Lord and His strategies rather than on themselves and their own strength. Under Joshua's leadership, the Israelites refused to settle for partial victory and compromise; instead, they pressed on and moved to fully occupy the land. We saw the Levites return to the path of following the Lord; as a result, their curse was transformed into a blessing. Throughout our time in the Word, we have witnessed Joshua, Caleb and many others make a lifetime of choices – believing God, possessing the land and leaving a legacy for future generations.

Prepare for Life

Have you responded to the call of God upon your life? Are you shifting out of passivity into the pursuit of God's promises? Are you implementing each of the keys described in this book, so that, step by step you are walking into freedom? The Promised Land is yours for the taking. It's time to start enjoying the blessings of your inheritance in Christ. It's time to start living in the Land of Milk and Honey! The choice is yours. "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!" (Joshua 24:15).

15. Consider the following scripture and meditate on it using the prayer exercise that was detailed on page 13.

❖ Scripture: *Psalm 27:4*

❖ Word or Phrase:

❖ Insight:

❖ Invitation:

16. The challenges that Joshua and the Israelites faced so long ago are the same challenges you face today. The principles of living in the Land of Milk and Honey are the same for you as well. Looking back over the keys that we have discussed and the verses you have meditated on over the past ten weeks, how is your life different today than it was before you began the study? Take some time to reflect on this and decide for yourself, this day, whom you will serve. Finish this study by writing out a prayer of response to the Lord's challenge to you.

You visit the earth and cause it to overflow; You greatly enrich it; the stream of God is full of water; You prepare their grain, for thus You prepare the earth.

You water its furrows abundantly, You settle its ridges, You soften it with showers, You bless its growth.

You have crowned the year with Your bounty, and Your paths drip with fatness.

The pastures of the wilderness drip, and the hills gird themselves with rejoicing.

The meadows are clothed with flocks, and the valleys are covered with grain; They shout for joy, yes, they sing.

Psalm 65:9-13

Lecture Notes: