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Joshua 15-17
Title: Keep Fighting
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Discussion questions:

1. What areas of life are most often messy or complicated? Why do you think that might be?
2. Read Philippians 1:6. How can this verse apply to our study in Joshua this week?
3. How do you think the tribes felt about their “growth areas”? How do you think about the areas we still need to grow?
4. Why might some people see the flesh as helpful? What could you say to convince them it is not?
5. What can you learn from Joshua’s response in 17:17-18?

Teaching Notes:

Have you noticed, life is not always clean and simple?

Sometimes things get really complicated and messy.

Joshua has led the battle, and now he is dividing the land...
...But it is not all cut and dry.

Truth is, you can do a great job...

...and things don’t always turn out great.

You thought your kids would be following Jesus by now.
You planned that your business would be stronger by now.
You hoped your relationships would be deeper by now.
But it is not quite where you wanted...yet.

You can do your best but, life is still messy & complicated.

...because people are messy, and life is complicated.
...so what do we do?

Today we examine an interesting situation with 3 tribes.

Here is the big idea: **We are all a work in progress, so keep fighting for progress.**

Title: Keep Fighting

When things aren’t working out...

...keep working and focus on progress.

Here is the situation...

Judah is given their land, and then it says...

15:63 As for the Jebusites, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the children of Judah could not drive them out; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem to this day.

Ephraim was given their land, and this was said at the end...

16:10 And they did not drive out the Canaanites who dwelt in Gezer; but the Canaanites dwell among the Ephraimites to this day and have become forced laborers.

After **Manasseh** has been given their land we are told...

17:12 Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out *the inhabitants of* those cities, but the Canaanites were determined to dwell in that land. 13 And it happened, when the children of Israel grew strong, that they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but did not utterly drive them out.

None of them completely drive out the Canaanites.

They had control of the land, but the Canaanites are still there.

For us, God is in control, but the flesh is still present.

...Sometimes it is a matter of time and progress...

But, sometimes we think the flesh will “work for us”.

We think it is our edge, what we need to succeed, or enjoy life.

Instead of driving the Canaanites out, they were forced labor.

A **relationship** works because it feels nice to have.

A **habit** you keep or an **attitude** you carry seems to work for you.

...But they don't bring God glory.

We may think these parts of the old life are good and needed.

If I stop being so aggressive and pushy, I won't be productive.

If I stop being so lazy or carefree, I won't be able to have fun.

If I stop the wine or the weed, I won't be able to relax.

If I stop looking at porn or having casual sex, I will be lonely.

If I stop being so sarcastic, I won't be respected

If I stop acting like I have all the answers, I won't be able to lead.

But, these unbiblical choices don't bring godly fruit.

They make things more messy, more complicated.

So what is God's will for your life?

I Thessalonians 4:3a tells us...

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification”

The Biblical term sanctification means “to be set apart”

Christ dwells in us...and He desires full control of us.

He goes thru the “land of our life” for places that need His work.

...He doesn't want the flesh to be forced labor...

...He wants His Spirit to work in us.

Sanctification is a process, it is not instantaneous.

Being a totally committed and fully following Christian...

...is a moving target we work on daily.

1. Keep fighting for sanctification.

Don't get wrapped up in being perfect, focus on forward progress.

For Ephraim, we are told they “**did not** drive out” the Canaanites.

For Judah and Manasseh it says, they “**could not** drive them out.”

Those in Manasseh were described as “**determined**” to stay.

Our old flesh is also determined to stay.

Remember, we have seen a few losses for Israel.

...But none of them were because God failed them.

It was always the choices they made that brought defeat.

For Ephraim and Judah, it says they just did not do it.

Why?...just didn't...were they distracted, disobedient, disinterested?

For us, maybe we see an attitude or a prejudice or a habit...

...BUT taking care of it is more work than we are willing to do.

We can get too comfortable to want to do what is uncomfortable.

We are too happy to do what is hard.

We are too satisfied to do something that is sacrificial.

But, the things you don't want to do, do have a purpose.

Your life is meant to be a place of worship and a demonstration of God's kingdom.

Gezer was supposed to be a place for the Levites.

Jerusalem would become the capital of the kingdom.

So what happened to these places?

They were places of fighting until...one day there was a new day.

Hundreds of years later there was a solution.

Actually, it was not just a solution, it was a savior...

...David the shepherd king brought victory and peace.

The Jebusites even mocked David about taking Jerusalem.

“The blind and the lame could defend this city against you!”

But David took Jerusalem, and made it the capital.

...And one of David’s mighty men took Gezer.

David’s life and leadership was forged in the wilderness.

He was not afraid to be uncomfortable.

He was not so satisfied he was unwilling to sacrifice for the Lord.

He was not so happy, he wouldn’t do hard things.

...And he led his men to do the same.

We will not do anything truly great without being uncomfortable at some level, without being willing to make some sacrifices for God or others, or without going through hard things along the way.

David led the people to finally have victory and peace...

...And both his tribe and the nation benefited.

When we let the King lead us, there will be victory.

...It may be uncomfortable, take sacrifice or be hard...

...but He will lead us to victory.

2. Keep fighting despite discomfort, sacrifice, or hard things.

So what about Manasseh? It says “They could not”

Fighting for Megiddo & other areas took more than they had.

It took more strength than they could muster.

But I thought no one could stand against them?!?

One of God’s first commands to Joshua was, “Be strong.”

Being strong is our responsibility.

If you choose to be weak, don’t expect to be strong...

...or expect to accomplish great things.

There are times or seasons where we are weaker than others.

...But a season of weakness shouldn’t become...

...a lifetime of feebleness.

We need to take steps to strengthen ourselves.

God’s word, community, confession, worship, prayer, holiness.

So what happened with the area of Megiddo?

Megiddo is an ongoing battlefield and key sight even today.

- 34 battles have been fought there.
- The prophet Deborah fought there.
- King Josiah was tragically killed there by Pharaoh Necho.

Megiddo is the first **historically recorded account** of a major war
...and it will also be the last in the book of Revelation...
...The final victory will come when Christ returns.

3. Keep fighting for strength and wait for Jesus.

There are some battles that just seem to keep going.

And sometimes the fight is what keeps you sharp.

But let's close with this last interaction...

17:14 Then the children of Joseph spoke to Joshua, saying, "Why have you given us *only* one lot and one share to inherit, since we *are* a great people, inasmuch as the Lord has blessed us until now?"

You gave us this section of land, but it is not big enough.

15 So Joshua answered them, "If you *are* a great people, *then* go up to the forest *country* and clear a place for yourself there in the land of the Perizzites and the giants, since the mountains of Ephraim are too confined for you." **16** But the children of Joseph said, "The mountain country is not enough for us; and all the Canaanites who dwell in the land of the valley have chariots of iron, *both those who are* of Beth Shean and its towns and *those who are* of the Valley of Jezreel."

Joshua says, I actually gave you enough, go take it!

They answer, it's too hard...forests to clear & iron chariots to fight.

They have an attitude we see even today...entitlement.

...I want something I don't have to work for.

The forests are hard work and the iron chariots are risky.

So what does Joshua say?

17 And Joshua spoke to the house of Joseph—to Ephraim and Manasseh—saying, "You *are* a great people and have great power; you shall not have *only* one lot, **18** but the mountain country shall be yours. Although it *is* wooded, you shall cut it down, and its farthest extent shall be yours; for you shall drive out the Canaanites, though they have iron chariots *and are strong.*"

In other words, you are where you are. You got what you got, so get to it.

Don't just look for somewhere new or something different.

Avoiding risks and hard work is not how to live...

...a victorious Christina life.

We are not entitled to victory...we fight for it.

4. Keep fighting for the win.

If you are not happy with what you see, get to work.

If you don't like what is going on, get involved.

A solution is not to run away & hope someone else will do it.

Help from friends, parents, the government...

...or even the church is fine at times...

...but there are some things we need to...

...roll up our sleeves and do ourselves.

Let's live the life God has given us to the best of our ability and see what He will do.