

**A SERIES IN
JOSHUA BY
CROSSWALK
CHURCH**

Impact

THE SERIES GUIDE

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Introduction

Dear Reader,

Welcome to IMPACT, our series on the life of Joshua. As we delve into portions of the Pentateuch, the New Testament, and the book that bears his name, I pray you will be inspired to find a new understanding of God's calling on your life. This journey can potentially ignite momentum in your spirituality, leading to personal growth and transformation.

There are two ways to understand the word IMPACT in these passages. The first is to listen as the Holy Spirit creates impressions in your life. Listen for His movement and invite Him to change you in ways you may not realize you need. Sense the hands of God squishing into the soft clay of your spiritual life and allow yourself to be shaped by His plans.

The second way I'm using the word IMPACT is as an invitation for you to activate as a part of the body of Christ. Your unique contribution is invaluable. You are intended to change the world around us. Allow the footsteps of Joshua to inspire you to action. Stretch your spiritual legs, make an impression, and leave your unique footprint in the damp sand of your community. Lay claim to hope for your family, vision for the church, and passion for those who don't know Jesus. Rise to the challenge of these words to go beyond voyeuristic reliance, patiently watching for God to do something while planning to stay out of it. Step. Dent your world. IMPACT.

I have been praying over your time in God's Word and these studies. May the Spirit of Christ bless you with His presence, forgiveness, and grace on this journey.

Lovewell,

Pastor Dave Ferguson and the Crosswalk Series Guide writing team.

Day 1-What's in a name?

Numbers 13:16

Moses gave Hoshea son of Nun the name Joshua.

I'm regularly puzzled about how to respond when asked my name. My parents named me David and I sign or write David Ferguson. But when I introduce myself, I always say, "Hi, I'm Dave." I don't remember exactly when it started, but I know why "Dave" is the name I associate with most.

I have always revered my father. He was my childhood hero. In my eyes, he could do anything. He is kind, strong, and the sort of man I've hoped to be. Also, we share the special connection of being born on the same day in May. Somewhere along the way, he began calling me Dave while I was a young boy. So, I am Dave.

While it may seem like a minor moment or a throwaway line, Numbers 13:16 contains an essential introduction to the study of our main character for this series. Given the name Hoshea at birth, Moses, his mentor and hero, changes his name to Joshua.

The Hebrew name Hoshea means "salvation." Wow. The pressure was on in a culture where parents selected aspirational names for their children. Don't miss the context of Numbers 13. This is when Moses sends 12 spies into Canaan, hoping the time is right to enter the land. And what

happens? Far from being the salvation of the Israelite nation, Hoshea's lack of influence results in the opposite... desperate, nomadic wandering, the death of everyone over the age of 20 (Caleb and Joshua excepted), and a profound disappointment. Ya, right, Mr. Salvation.

The subtle renaming from Hoshea to Joshua is not just a name change; it's a profound shift in identity. This is the crux of our study. In his wisdom, Moses knows something his young understudy will need to learn. And we shouldn't ignore it either. Joshua combines two Hebrew words: Hoshea (salvation) and Yahweh (the Lord). It means "the Lord will save." This is not just a name; it's a prophecy, a promise, a testament to the divine plan.

As Joshua leads the Israelites across the dried Jordan riverbed or seven laps around Jericho, lays claim to the promised land, and disperses it to each tribe, we could be lured to undue admiration of this leader. We might be intimidated and back away from God's calling on our own lives. But read Joshua's name, which reminds you that the Lord saves, and He will use anyone to do so. You are exactly what God needs to impact this world.

1. What does your name mean?
2. Have you ever felt pressure to accomplish something you aren't capable of? What was that?
3. What potential impact is God talking to you about right now?

Day 2 - What's in a name?

Matthew 1:21

“... you are to give him the name Jesus because He will save His people from their sins.”

The Greek equivalent of the Hebrew name Joshua is Jesus. They are each translated as “The Lord saves.”

Matthew tells us of the coming Christ in the opening chapter of his Gospel. He introduces us to Mary and Joseph while explaining the miraculous birth through the Holy Spirit. In the 20th verse, an angel appears to Joseph, attempting to convince him to stay with Mary even though he isn't the father of the child she carries. The angel explains that Mary will have a son and instructs Joseph to name Him Jesus “because He will save His people from their sins.”

Joshua is given his name as a prompt to surrender and lay claim to the saving power of Yahweh. Jesus is given His name not as a reminder but as the fulfillment of that hope. He is this saving Yahweh. The Angel proclaims, “He will save.” He is Yahweh. He is Jesus.

This is perfect timing as we embark on this study. Take these two things to heart: first, apart from Jesus, we can do nothing (John 15:5), and second, we can do everything through Jesus who strengthens us (Philippians 4:13).

Receive courage from these truths. The Biblical hero of the Old Testament, whose name gets changed to the Hebrew equivalent of “Jesus,” is not much different from you or me.

Joshua is not the salvation of Israel (no longer named Hoshea). Jesus is. And you will not be the salvation of your family, your workplace, or your faith community. Jesus is. He is the Messiah, the Christ, the One who was, and is, and is to come (Revelation 1:8).

But don't miss the second part of the equation. Jesus chooses to work through us. Repeatedly, through the pages of the Book of Joshua, we will find examples and reminders that God inexplicably harnesses His power to people like you and me. And through this partnership, the extraordinary happens: rivers are crossed, walls fall down, promises are made, and promises are fulfilled.

So, let's commit to making ourselves available to God's audacious whispers over the next few weeks as we travel down dusty desert trails across the Jordan River and into the promised land. Begin praying that Jesus reveals to you a new journey of faith.

1. Which is more challenging for you to accept, that you can do nothing without Jesus or that you can do anything through Jesus?
2. What is something you have tried to do on your own that you should submit to Jesus?
3. What is something Jesus is calling you to attempt in your partnership with Him?

Day 3 – The Power of Mentors

Exodus 24:13

Then Moses set out with Joshua his aide, and Moses went up on the mountain of God.

Numbers 11:28

Joshua son of Nun, who had been Moses' aide since youth...

I invite you to reflect on the journey of our central figure as he assumes the mantle of leadership over God's people. His narrative begins long before the book that bears his name. In three instances, as we encounter Joshua in Exodus and Numbers, the scriptures identify him as Moses' aide (Exodus 24:13; 33:11; Numbers 11:28). Some translations use the terms assistant, attendant, helper, or minister. This signifies a life of service, a commitment to meeting Moses' needs. In addition, his youth (or lack of experience) is typically mentioned. As is often the case, long before assuming the primary leadership role, Joshua is a supporting character in a position of servitude.

Serving under the guidance of another often prepares us for God's calling in the future. Joshua is uniquely positioned to witness the triumphs and errors in Moses' ministry. Moreover, we observe signs of loyalty and humility in the young assistant, indicating his readiness to learn and develop under the seasoned teacher.

Perhaps no better definition for Moses's relationship with Joshua is that of a mentor. If we pay attention, we notice that God's movement regularly relies on meaningful mentoring friendships: Jethro and Moses, Eli and Samuel, Elijah and

Elisha, Jesus and His disciples, Barnabas and John Mark. We could go on... Moses to Joshua.

How many missteps did Joshua avoid by observing Moses' leadership life? Indeed, he must have treasured the private conversations with his mentor on Mount Sinai. Exodus 33:11 even implies Joshua was in the "Tent of God's Presence" to listen in as God spoke to Moses face-to-face as a friend. Moses's willingness to grant uncommon access is important in Joshua's spiritual development.

Important work often requires an apprenticeship, growing under the watchful eye of someone more experienced, and the guidance of a mentor. Why should it be any different in God's kingdom work today? Making an impact is not a lone-wolf endeavor. The mentors we seek and the relationships we build are crucial.

1. Who is someone you consider to be a mentor? Have you told them? What is something you have learned from them?
2. In what aspect of your life could you improve with the benefit of a mentor? Who could potentially fill that role?
3. Who are you currently mentoring? Who could you serve as a mentor?

Day 4 – Second Fiddle

Exodus 17:8-13

While the people of Israel were still at Rephidim, the warriors of Amalek attacked them. Moses commanded Joshua, “Choose some men to go out and fight the army of Amalek for us. Tomorrow, I will stand at the top of the hill, holding the staff of God in my hand.”

So Joshua did what Moses had commanded and fought the army of Amalek. Meanwhile, Moses, Aaron, and Hur climbed to the top of a nearby hill. As long as Moses held up the staff in his hand, the Israelites had the advantage. But whenever he dropped his hand, the Amalekites gained the advantage. Moses’ arms soon became so tired he could no longer hold them up. So Aaron and Hur found a stone for him to sit on. Then they stood on each side of Moses, holding up his hands. So his hands held steady until sunset. As a result, Joshua overwhelmed the army of Amalek in battle.

Our first exposure to Joshua comes from the battle with the Amalekites told in Exodus 17. This extraordinary story would read very differently if limited to the first and last verses:

Moses commanded Joshua, “Go out and fight the army of Amalek for us.” “. . . So Joshua overwhelmed the army of Amalek in battle.”

Joshua is the clear hero. He holds the main stage. Surely, songs will be written about him. The only problem is the middle verses, where the results aren’t attributed to Joshua’s courage or leadership insight. Instead, everything depends on

Moses' arm strength. Joshua seems less crucial than Aaron and Hur, who hold Moses' hands.

Side note: Once, as a chaplain at a high school, I supervised a basketball team warm-up. The players were doing stretching drills and calisthenics while my four-year-old daughter watched. Several players were facing a wall, jumping and tapping the wall as high as they could in quick repetition, when she turned to me and asked, "Daddy, what are they doing?" I explained it was an exercise designed to work on their jumping and to give them the stamina to keep their hands up on defense. She quickly responded, "Well, it would have been good for Moses to do this exercise. Then he wouldn't have needed those men to hold his hands up."

The Children of Israel revered Moses (at least when they weren't complaining to him or wanting him dead). Like a football quarterback, he received credit or blame for everything that happened. This made it hard for Joshua to emerge as a viable leadership candidate. He was on the JV team, back in the shadows, the water boy, second fiddle.

It reminds me of high school class officer elections where a student is voted class president, not because of work ethic or visionary ideas. More likely, they are elected for being popular among the student body. In the meantime, a deserving student in the vice president position (or with no elected position) picks up the slack and does the hard work with little or no recognition.

This is Joshua's status in the closing days of Moses' life as the multitude of Hebrews hovers over the Jordan River, longing to cross into what God has promised. They don't know it yet, but God's answer to their needs will shortly come off the

bench from the third-string lineup. Another bold admission that God often prefers to use the lesser things.

1. Do you prefer to work behind the scenes or from the front? Why do you think that is?
2. Is there a portion of your life where you feel someone else keeps getting credit for your hard work? How do you react when this happens?
3. What new and potentially uncomfortable role(s) do you hear God asking you to consider? What is your response?

Day 5 – The Problem of Comparison

Galatians 6:4

Pay careful attention to your own work, for then you will get the satisfaction of a job well done, and you won't need to compare yourself to anyone else.

Joshua learned and grew from many years of assisting Moses. He had a close-up view of leading this challenging group of people. However, serving that closely created the potential for a dangerous problem: comparison.

There are some marked similarities between these back-to-back leaders. They will hold the same position and lead this swarm of people across a dried-up body of water (Moses: the Red Sea; Joshua: the Jordan River). Both led the people through battles, searched for provisions, spoke directly with God, and had the ultimate goal of entering the promised land.

Beyond the similarities, the Children of Israel will continually rehearse the exploits of Moses in Joshua's hearing at the inception of his leadership and for years to come. Moses will be seen as the hero of the Exodus for generations and millennia. How hard it must have been to resist muttering how he would have done things differently at the waters of Meribah Kadesh (Numbers 20), where Moses was disqualified from entering Canaan. Was Joshua ever tempted to insert, "Well, at least I got us out of that desert," into the hallowed remembrances of his predecessor?

There is no record that the crippling problem of comparison plagued Joshua. But it was available to him as it is to us today. It crops up in board rooms, families, and faith communities. And its impact is severe.

Comparison distorts our view of others and ourselves. For some, we use this tool to become arrogant while elevating and isolating ourselves. Others use comparison to put themselves down, become paralyzed, and excuse themselves from God's calling. Either way, God's intentions are thwarted. Comparison often robs us of gratitude, invites us down trivial rabbit holes, turns teammates into enemies, and sidetracks us from tasks we are meant to accomplish. As Galatians 6:4-5 says, ***“Each one should test his own actions.... without comparing [yourselves] to somebody else, for each one should carry his own load.”***

There will always be opportunities to compare. There were for Joshua, and there will be for you. Let's not allow distracting comparisons to disrupt the impact God invites us to make.

1. Does comparison typically cause you to think too much of yourself or too little? Why do you think that is?
2. Who do you most easily compare yourself to? What is often the result?
3. What God-given task has comparison distracted you from? What should you do about that?

Day 6 – Dismount Deuteronomy 34:5-12

So Moses, the servant of the LORD, died there in the land of Moab, just as the LORD had said. The LORD buried him in a valley near Beth-peor in Moab, but to this day no one knows the exact place. Moses was 120 years old when he died, yet his eyesight was clear, and he was as strong as ever. The people of Israel mourned for Moses on the plains of Moab for thirty days, until the customary period of mourning was over.

Now Joshua son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him. So the people of Israel obeyed him, doing just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

There has never been another prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face. The LORD sent him to perform all the miraculous signs and wonders in the land of Egypt against Pharaoh, and all his servants, and his entire land. With mighty power, Moses performed terrifying acts in the sight of all Israel.

There is a big difference between celebrating your history and being stuck in the past. As the Native American Tribal saying goes, “When the horse is dead, dismount.” In a literal way, Israel is faced with this challenge. They need to mourn and to let go.

Today’s passage from Deuteronomy is the prologue to Joshua’s coronation. Moses has died. Yet, Joshua is barely

mentioned, and even then, it is an excuse to share that Moses had laid his hands on him.

I grew up with an older brother. He was always bigger, faster, and stronger than me. This story reads like my teenage experiences when someone would introduce me by name only to launch into glowing stories about my older brother. Come on, man. Dismount. Israel needs a new leader. Moses is gone. But they can't stop talking about how great he was... "There's never been anyone as good. Do you remember how he humiliated Pharaoh and led us to freedom? Moses was so powerful. Our enemies were terrified. Oh, and did you hear? God was his pallbearer."

It is one thing when history inspires us to action. It is quite another to become paralyzed by the allure of going backward. The time has come to move forward with a different leader. Dismount. The horse that got you this far has died.

Even so, as the book of Joshua begins, our new leader needs to be spurred forward. So, God speaks directly to him, "*Moses, my servant, is dead. Therefore, the time has come for you to lead...*" Dismount the former ways, the expectations of the past, and the customs of the good ole days. Lean into the new thing God has been planning.

Could we be as mesmerized by our pasts as the Children of Israel? Do we glorify the victories of yesterday? Do we wallow in what was done to us? Are we idolizing the good and perpetuating the bad? What needs to be dismantled and buried?

1. What experience is dead that you need to dismount?

2. Are you more likely to be paralyzed by memorializing good history or rehearsing painful experiences? What could you do to move past this?

Day 7

Small Group Study

INTRODUCTION

The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion between you and the person you're studying with or with your Connect Group. Feel free to add, subtract, or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

OPEN QUESTIONS

Do you know what your name means, why it was given to you, and have you always gone by that name, or another name/nickname? If another name, why?

HEAD

1. Read Numbers 13:16, Matthew 1:21, Exodus 24:13, Numbers 11:28, Exodus 17:8-13, Galatians 6:4, Deuteronomy 34:5-12 together and share any wisdom, insights, or thoughts that come to you from the reading.
2. In our first passage, Moses changes Hoshea's name to Joshua. What other name changes can you think of in Scripture? In a time when names were so important to calling and character, why do you think a name change was important for Joshua?

3. Thinking of the story of Joshua, what comparisons can you make with the story of Jesus, both names translated as “Yahweh saves”?
4. What was so important about the relationship between Joshua and Moses, and what can we learn from it in our relationships with others today?
5. From Galatians 6:4, why is comparison so dangerous in the spiritual life? How about in life in general? Social Media is a place of comparisons, who do we avoid making comparisons in everyday life?
6. After a eulogy like what’s found in Deuteronomy 34:10-12, how do you think Joshua would have felt with such big sandals to fill?

HEART

1. When people here your name and think of you, what do you want them to think about? Is that different from what you think they actually think about? If different, how do we close the gap between the two?
2. Is there anyone of the younger generation that you are or have mentored, spoken truth into? If so, what was that like and do you think it made a difference in their life? If not, or if it’s been a while, is there someone in your circle that you could encourage and mentor?
3. Have you ever had to take over for someone who was larger than life? If so, what was that like and how did you handle it?
4. Knowing that Jesus and Joshua’s lives were meant to point to the saving work of God, how can our lives today do the same?

HANDS

Since Paul wrote in I Corinthians 5:17, that we are all new creations in Christ (which can be represented in Scripture by a new name), what do you think is new about you with Christ that wasn't that way before Christ? Take time to celebrate what God has done and is doing in your life, and then take some time to notice those changes in the life of someone around you. Affirm God's work in their life this week, tell them what you see and appreciate, and encourage them to keep walking hand-in-hand with Christ.

LIVING WORDS FOR YOUR WEEK

“So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now! This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!”

2 Corinthians 5:16-17 NLT

Week 2: The Coronation of a New Leader

Day 8 – Now Then, You

Joshua 1:2

“Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you...”

Every human being observes things they wish would be different. We all have pet peeves, a sense of what organizations should or should not do, observations about

parenting, driving, or how to make a good cup of coffee. We all have opinions. And we share them freely. On Facebook or Instagram, around the dinner table, or in the church lobby, most of us are loud-opinionated.

But here's the thing: there's a clear divide between those who merely talk about problems and those who take action. The rare person sees a challenge and decides they are the one to do something positive about it.

In the leadership vacuum of Moses' death, the people are sad and directionless. The Israelites are an organization without vision, a business without a CEO, or a political party without a candidate.

From the void, the voice of God directly addresses Joshua. *"Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you..."* He declares. God restates the issue and provides the solution. Joshua, it is you. And it is now.

I wonder if Joshua was tempted to let out a tired sigh or say in a whiney voice, "Does it have to be me?" The only evidence of hesitation is the forcefulness of God's simple demand. "YOU." "NOW."

So, what about today? Complaining is easy. Our denomination appears concerned with all the wrong things. Our country has lost its moral compass, fewer and fewer care about God, and His people have lost the ability to love or even be civil. Seriously, someone should do something before it's too late.

Out of the headlines of pain and YouTube clips of distraction, the voice of God calls to you and me, "Now then, you..." The time is now, and God's answer is you.

Like Joshua's predecessor, we may argue with God or whine about feelings of inadequacy. Meanwhile, the spiritual death toll continues to rise. Never forget that God doesn't give us responsibility and then leave us to our own devices. His commitment is never to leave or forsake us. His power is meant to be unleashed through our willingness. Still, He prefers working through us rather than on His own.

So, will you show up, step out and lead? "Now then, you..."

1. What is a project you took on that was successful beyond your expectations? How did this happen?
2. Is there something you sense God calling you to accomplish? What is it? What is holding you back?

Day 9 – Footprint

Joshua 1:3

"I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses."

Have you ever felt like your prayers go unanswered and you are stuck in some difficult situation? Your struggles drag on for years, and the paralyzation seems endless. Still, as people of faith, we pray, even when it feels hopeless. But only some survive the sense of silence.

We all have friends who didn't emerge whole and healthy from this experience. Many walk away from a relationship with God because of "unanswered prayers." So, there is something important to be gained as we consider the

experience of God's people towards the end of their wilderness wanderings.

The Israelites have circled the desert for forty years by now. Surely, many have prayed to come unstuck from this nomadic experience. So, as God coronates His newest leader, He does so with one part promise and one part challenge, *"I will give you every place you set your foot."*

Take a moment and visualize the fulfillment of these words. God has given a gift, but it will be forever unclaimed until Joshua moves his foot. Incidentally, this echoes the same assurance God gave Moses regarding the Promised Land in Deuteronomy 11. This is no new posture. This is how God works. He provides something miraculous but leaves us one little move of our foot. He did this on the cross with the gift of salvation. He creates the miracle, provides the gift, paves the way, but leaves the footstep to our freedom of choice. This act of faith is up to you and me.

I wonder what God thinks when I sit on my couch waiting for a miracle He has already provided. Do you suppose He wants to rattle the walls and roll with thunder as I ask today for what He did for me yesterday? It must be like a parent who lovingly wraps a gift their child has requested only to have that boy or girl refuse to open it out of frustration that they haven't gotten the item yet.

So, today, set your foot. Lay claim to the gift of salvation already bought and paid for. Participate in the miracle of community through which God intends to bring healing to our communities. Act in faith, step into leadership, offer to serve, set your foot in the squishy mud of God's cause and make an impact.

1. What is a gift you wanted for a long time? How did you feel when you received it or when you never did?
2. What is something you have prayed for over a long period of time? Is there a way you sense God inviting you to participate in the fulfillment of that prayer? What is it?
3. Where do you stand with Jesus today? Have you asked for forgiveness and told Him you accept His gift of salvation?

Day 10 – What is faith?

Hebrews 11:1

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

Faith is a tricky concept. We often describe it as something that happens deep inside—the kind of thing you probably don't know a person is experiencing. You can't see it. This often leads us to wonder if we have it.

We pray for more faith and often talk about it like it has the consistency of sand. We try to hold it in our hands but only find it slipping through our fingers. Jesus' disciples felt this way, too.

Luke 17 records a fascinating interaction where the disciples say, “*Lord, show us how to increase our faith.*” (v5). How does Jesus respond? Does He suggest more prayer? Bible study? Meditation? No. He responds, “*If you had faith even as small as a mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, ‘May you be uprooted and be planted in the sea,’ and it would obey*

you!” (v6). Jesus refers to the tiny mustard seed, suggesting that the quantity of their faith isn’t the issue. Instead, even the smallest amount of faith put into action has enough power to change things, to make an impact, uproot a mulberry tree and send it into the sea.

When I read Hebrews 11’s description of faith, I think of getting out of bed in the middle of the night in pitch-black darkness. I swing my feet to the floor, stand up bleary-eyed, and make my way to the bathroom or the door to the hallway. I can’t see the floor, the end of the bed, the toe-stubbing possibilities of my wife’s dresser, or the hall door. My body takes action based on faith. My mind held all the same notions moments before I sat up in bed. But it wasn’t fully faith until the potential became reality and my body moved.

It shouldn’t surprise us that the writer of Hebrews unpacks his first verse describing faith by telling numerous stories filled with action. Throughout the remainder of Hebrews 11, we read of person after person who *acted* in faith.

That’s it. Faith implies action—not just sitting and waiting for something to happen but moving your foot into the spaces of victory God has already claimed.

“Wherever you set foot, you will be on land I have given you...”
(Joshua 1:3)

1. What are a couple of hobbies you enjoy? In what ways do they require you to be active?
2. If you could have any superpower you wanted, what would it be? Why?
3. What is something you have wished you could do for God? What is holding you back? What conversation

would you like to have with God about this? What do you hear Him saying back to you?

Day 11 – The Next Square

Deuteronomy 11:24

Wherever you set foot, that land will be yours.

If I'm honest, God's bold proclamation to Moses and later to Joshua frightens me a bit. It sounds like God is suggesting I can do anything. "Wherever I set my foot..." Does that include every board room and job interest? Do I get to have every relationship I desire? Does this carry to the basketball court and every business venture? Seriously, that's a lot of pressure. And it also sounds a lot like a prosperity gospel infomercial. But the specific metaphor is helpful here.

The great news is your foot can only reach one of your stride lengths at a time. If you've been spiritually stagnant or hesitant to move in your relationship with Jesus, He isn't asking you to walk as fast as He can. He desires you to lay claim to the next closest square foot. If He has a long distance for you to travel, that's a conversation for tomorrow. Today, move your foot.

There is a second blessing in the metaphor. He challenges you to move **YOUR** foot. Where the previous point considered the pace of change, this second speaks to your uniqueness. It is **your** foot He wants to move. It is **your** stride length, gate, and footprint in the sand. Jesus calls you to make an impact that only **your** footfall can make.

The risky miracle of God's plan to spread His love across this world is that there are some square feet right next to you that no one else can reach. He invites you to step out and step up in faith, knowing He has already given you the place to stand. You are not asked to walk like someone else or take the shape of another person's foot. This means your distinctive talents, interests, and experiences all come into play. He uses outgoing people and introverts, every hobby you love, every skill you've developed, and passion you feel. The specific experiences of your past, even the painful ones, become the colors God uses to decorate an untouched space with His love.

So move your foot to one adjacent square and step into the miracle God has prepared.

1. What are the typical ways others describe you? What does that suggest about the best ways you impact others?
2. Who are the people that live and work closest to you? Pick one to pray for over the next seven days and listen to hear something God invites you to consider.
3. What is a talent you especially enjoy using? How could God involve that talent in what He calls you into next?

Day 12 – Micromovements

Proverbs 16:9

In his heart a man plans his course, but the LORD determines his steps.

As you read or listen to this today, there is a likelihood you have no idea where God intends to take you over a handful of next steps. I wouldn't have imagined my current role at Crosswalk a few short years ago. I couldn't see around a handful of corners and wouldn't have named where I am today.

It's natural to feel unsettled by the uncertainty of life's journey. I've been there too. We often wish we could see the end before we begin, but there's a mercy in not knowing. It prevents us from being overwhelmed by the distance and encourages us to take the first step.

During the first half of my career, I regularly attended a national youth workers' convention called Youth Specialties. There were motivating general sessions, excellent opportunities for networking, and many seminars to attend. One year, I participated in a seminar called Micromovements by Craig McNair Wilson on achieving creative goals.

As we began, Wilson invited us to envision an achievement we would love to accomplish but hadn't attempted in any way. I scribbled, "Learn to play guitar," on my notepad (I'm

an excellent seminar-goer). Then, he asked us to think of the smallest possible step toward accomplishing that goal. If it crosses your mind that buying a guitar or taking lessons could be that step, you and I have entirely different financial realities. Those are not small steps. I wrote, “The next time I pass a store that seems to have guitars in it, and I have spare time, I will go inside (did I mention how great I am at participating in seminars?).” The training was excellent. However, once I was home, my pad of notes was placed on a stack of similar items and forgotten.

One day, a few weeks later, I was driving back to the office after lunch. It hadn’t taken me long to grab a bite, and I was dragging my feet to get back to work. Passing a sign for Fred’s Music Store, my notes hit me. With a sudden course adjustment, I swerved into the parking lot and walked inside. Looking over the walls lined with hanging guitars, I felt overwhelmed and alien. The prices were intimidating and out of reach. Then, I rounded a corner and discovered several guitars marked with two-digit price tags. One read, “\$10.” “What are these?” I asked. “Oh, those are monthly rentals,” the attendant responded.

As I stepped through the door to our home, my wife's eyes widened in surprise. I was carrying a guitar and some chord books. My journey to learn guitar had begun. It was a simple step, but it had set a transformation in motion. This is the beauty of micromovements- they are not just effective. They are transformative.

“... everywhere you set your foot.” One footstep at a time.

1. Looking back on your life, what have you accomplished that surprises you? Think through the steps required for this to happen.

2. What is something you would love to accomplish?
What is the smallest possible step you can think of?
3. What decision or journey is God talking to you about right now?

Day 13 – Perseverance

Joshua 1:5

No one will be able to stand against you as long as you live. For I will be with you as I was with Moses. I will not fail you or abandon you.

Our commitment to following God into the next square foot of space is easily undone. Frustration with our failings or the slowness of pace can derail us. One of the most common sources of paralyzation is the criticism or opposition of others. So, it isn't surprising that God would address this obstacle as He challenges Joshua to step into leadership.

Several things make God's promise worth discussing. First, He challenges our hope that we will go unopposed. We hear, "*No one will be able to stand against you...*," and think it predicts smooth sailing. Did God promise there will be no human obstacles? Read carefully, we notice He is saying the exact opposite. "*No one will be able...*," means someone will want to, try to, mean to stand against us. And then there is the finish to the sentence, "... *as long as you live.*" Again, listen to that whole sentence slowly: "*No one will be able to stand against you as long as you live.*" This may mean that even though people will try to stand up to block, they won't be able to get up and start thwarting you... ever. It can also mean that someone will stand in opposition, criticize, and obstruct progress but won't stay standing your entire life. Woah, those are two very different ideas. The first is that we

will never experience the discouraging presence of adversaries. The other? Enemies will surely arise and make walking with Jesus difficult. But eventually, we will get past them. The second half of the verse suggests the latter. This inevitable opposition is not a cause for fear but the perfect place for God to appear.

Verse five continues with, “... *I will be with you... I will not fail you or abandon you.*” Why is this triplicate of encouragement necessary? Precisely because there will be difficult moments facing enemies of His cause. God wanted Joshua to know, wants us to know, that even when the path seems too hard to walk, He has not left us. This is comforting. Just as certainly as difficulty arises, our Savior walks with us. He will never leave us. And He gets the last word over our enemies, problems, and discouragements. He brings victory to our lives.

1. What is something you are afraid of? Have your phobias changed over the years? If so, how?
2. What is a longstanding battle that you have fought? What would victory look like?
3. On a scale of 1-10, where 1 = discouraged and 10 = encouraged, where do you stand today? What would you like to ask or thank God for related to this number?

Day 14

Small Group Study

INTRODUCTION

The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion between you and the person you're studying with or with your

Connect Group. Feel free to add, subtract, or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

OPEN QUESTIONS

Share one thing in your life that you never thought you'd be able to accomplish, or others thought you'd never accomplish, but then you did. What was that like? What helped you achieve your goal?

HEAD

1. Read Joshua 1:1-5, Hebrews 11:1, Deuteronomy 11:24, Proverbs 16:9 together and share any wisdom, insights, or thoughts that come to you from the reading.
2. Knowing how the people revered Moses, what do you think it was like for Joshua to now step into Moses' shoes, especially with God promising to do such big things through him?
3. In Joshua 1:5, the promise God makes is that He will be with Joshua as He was with Moses. Do you think this was hard for Joshua to believe? If so, why? If not, why not? (see Joshua 1:9 and how God has to reaffirm Joshua)
4. Joshua must have faith, as described in Hebrews 11:1. What kinds of things are we sure of what we hope for, and what kinds of things are we certain of, that we do not see?
5. What do you think Solomon was really saying in Proverbs 16:9? Does it not matter what choices we make because God's purpose will prevail? If so, how

does that work? If not, what are we to do in our journey with God so that His purpose in our lives does prevail?

HEART

1. God promised to give Joshua and the Israelites every place they set their foot. That meant there was something for them to do (move their feet), and something God would do in return. What does this look like in our faith journey today? In what ways are we challenged to move, trusting in God to live up to His end of the promise?
2. How would you describe what faith is to another person who doesn't know? What is your faith journey like for you, and what do you think it gives you?
3. Proverbs 16:9 is really about surrender. It's about making plans but recognizing that at the end of the day, God is in control. What are some ways you and I can practice surrender in our daily walk with God?
4. God promises Joshua that he will not fail or abandon us. But have you ever felt as if God failed you, or abandoned you? So how do we reconcile those negative feelings we have from time to time in our journey with God? Just because we feel a certain way, does it mean our feelings are reality?
5. How can you and I persevere in our faith, even in those moments that it feels as if God has abandoned or failed us? What helps us keep going?

HANDS

Take some time to think about the goals you want to accomplish in your life in the next 3-5 years. Then, surrender those goals to God, asking Him to help you persevere or let go when and as you need to, trusting that God wants the absolute best for you in your life. Then share what you learn from this experience with at least one other person.

LIVING WORDS FOR YOUR WEEK

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.”

Proverbs 3:5-6 NLT

Week 3: Crossing the Jordan River **Day 15 – Courage**

Joshua 1:6-9

“Be strong and courageous, for you are the one who will lead these people to possess all the land I swore to their ancestors I would give them. Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the instructions Moses gave you. Do not deviate from them, turning either to the right or to the left. Then you will be successful in everything you do. Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do. This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”

As Joshua's leadership inauguration ends in chapter one, God bolsters his confidence by challenging him three times to be strong and courageous. If it were me, this would be cause for worry. The first time I'd get it. I need to be ready. Strength and courage are required for the challenges of leadership. The second time, I'd wonder, did you think I wasn't listening? But the third I would be concerned. What is about to happen here?

A word or two about courage might be helpful. Nelson Mandela once said:

"I learned that courage was not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it. The brave man is not he who does not feel afraid, but he who conquers that fear."

It is telling that God sees repeating Himself three times as necessary. He knows us better than we know ourselves. He understands how we are ruled by fear and that we have many. Is the victory God has already miraculously provided often aborted because of our fears? Or maybe, when we fear, we wait, hoping it will pass so we can place our foot in the next space. All the while, God coaxes and reassures us, hoping we will move forward despite our trembling feet. The secret to His encouragement is also repeated.

Twice in five verses, God gives the reason we can be strong and courageous: "For I will be with you." The word commonly translated as "for" might as well read "because." You can be strong and courageous because God will be with you. He is the antidote to fear—not because He takes it away, but because He helps us step through it.

1. Are you more afraid of snakes, public speaking, or heights? Why do you think that is your ranking?

2. What is a fear you have recently overcome or powered through? How did you do that?
3. What are you facing that causes you to fear? What would you like to say to God about that? How is He responding?

Day 16 – The Relative Nature of Disappointment

Numbers 14:30

Not one of you will enter the land I swore with uplifted hand to make your home...

As I write today, I am angry, sad, and, honestly, a little surprised. Let's back up a couple of days.

Friday, my wife and I began a trip to Portland for my annual unplugged work week. During this time, I disconnect from my usual routines, the internet, and my phone to take on a set task. This year's goal? Writing the series guide for our Joshua study.

All of this was interrupted Sunday when our neighbor texted my wife and mentioned that our garage door was standing half open. FaceTime provided the discovery tour of our garage and house. As the camera neared, we could see broken glass on the garage floor. Someone(s) had broken the

center pane of a window in our garage door, reached in, and pulled the cord that detaches the door from the electronic opener. This gave them access to lift the door halfway, as they had done. We had been burgled.

What had they taken? My heart immediately dropped as I followed the camera pan across the floor of our garage. The last thing I did before we made our way to the airport Friday was remove a bag from our car and place it in the middle of that floor. It was gone.

This past May was my 60th birthday, and my wife and some friends had given me an extravagant gift. I was fitted for new golf clubs that took most of a month to be delivered. It was the most expensive birthday gift I've ever received, and I treasured it. Even as we left for two weeks, I was filled with excitement and expectation for my summer of golf upon return. Did I mention that just before departing for the airport, I took this gift out of our car and placed it in the middle of our garage floor?

The thieves grabbed that bag of clubs and rounded the corner to the second garage bay. They found my old set and golf shoes and took those as well. Golf equipment was all they took. They passed by expensive tools, a generator, an air compressor, and a power washer. And they neglected to enter the house through the unlocked entry from the garage to search for more valuables. Somehow, this made me feel worse.

The joy of receiving this gift and the love that had provided it, my affection for the game of golf, my expectations for the remainder of the summer... poof. It was gone. And it was all too much to process. If I'm honest, I was near tears. I was angry and sad.

... continued tomorrow.

1. What hobby do you have that fills you with joy?
2. What is the most lavish gift you have ever received? Who gave it to you? Have you told them what it means to you?
3. What disappointments do you struggle to process? Why do you think that is?

Day 17 – The Relative Nature of Disappointment – Part 2

Joshua 3:14-16

... when the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant went ahead of them. Now the Jordan is at flood stage all during harvest. Yet as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water's edge, the water from upstream stopped flowing. It piled up in a heap a great distance away, at a town called Adam in the vicinity of Zarethan, while the water flowing down to the Sea of the Arabah (the Salt Sea) was completely cut off. So the people crossed over opposite Jericho.

... continued from yesterday.

As I sat stunned by this burglary, a sense of surprise overwhelmed my other emotions. Why was I so affected by this theft? It was just stuff, after all. No one was hurt. Most of our house and valuables were safe. We have insurance and are surrounded by caring neighbors and friends. I realized the depth of disappointment that arises when our visualized expectations go unmet.

Disappointment can be overwhelming, a dense fog through which we cannot see. It can arise from severe or silly matters. It drains us of perspective and can cause us to do regrettable things. These realizations hit me amidst supremely recoverable losses and drew my mind to my study of the Children of Israel at the time of Joshua.

The entirety of the Israelite identity was connected to the anticipation of God's deliverance into the promised land. So much worse than losing a set of golf clubs, they had to face the loss of a generation as they wandered around in the wilderness far beyond their expected timeline. Talk about disappointment and unmet expectations. How difficult must it have been to continue to believe in the land of promise?

This is where the voice of God says, "Trust me. I am bringing you through your disappointment. I can see what you cannot." Isaiah 55:9 says, "*...just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.*"

Have you noticed that it becomes increasingly difficult to remember the things you were disappointed about as time passes? From our perspective today, the wilderness wandering was a tiny blip on the radar. The bigger deal? God fulfilled His promise.

1. What is something that was a big deal at the time it occurred that now seems small?
2. Do you find it easy or challenging to handle disappointment? Why do you think that is?
3. What current disappointments do you find difficult to process? What would you like to say to Jesus about that?

Post Script:

One week later, I have returned to this writing. It's amazing the difference a few days make. And that's the point, isn't it?

Insurance will cover the new clubs and some of the older set. Credit card purchase protection should cover our insurance deductible. Clubs have been reordered, and I feel renewed and excited to return home and rebuild my hobby.

A change in perspective is powerful. What if I could bottle it up and apply it to other areas of my life? How would my experience be affected if I could remember the difference the passing of time creates? The loss of an item, a dream, or even a life on this earth adds up differently when possessing a God's-eye-view of the future.

Day 18 – Ready

Joshua 1:10-2:1

Joshua then commanded the officers of Israel, “Go through the camp and tell the people to get their provisions ready. In three days you will cross the Jordan River and take possession of the land the LORD your God is giving you.”

Then Joshua called together the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh. He told them, “Remember what Moses, the servant of the LORD, commanded you: ‘The LORD your God is giving you a place of rest. He has given you this land.’ Your wives, children, and livestock may remain here in the land Moses assigned to you on the east side of the Jordan River. But your strong warriors, fully armed, must lead the other tribes across the Jordan to help them conquer their territory. Stay with them until the LORD gives them rest, as he has given you rest, and until they, too, possess the land the LORD your God is giving them. Only then may you return and settle here on the east side of the Jordan River in the land that Moses, the servant of the LORD, assigned to you.”

They answered Joshua, “We will do whatever you command us, and we will go wherever you send us. We will obey you just as we obeyed Moses. And may the LORD your God be with you as he was with Moses. Anyone who rebels against your orders and does not obey your words and everything you command will be put to death. So be strong and courageous!”

Then Joshua secretly sent out two spies from the Israelite camp at Acacia Grove. He instructed them, “Scout out the land on the other side of the Jordan River, especially around Jericho.” So the two men set out...

In the book *The Power of Habit*, Charles Duhigg describes keystone actions. The formation of these habits positively correlates to the adoption of other great habits. For example, data shows that making your bed each morning predicts your arrival at work on time. Preparation suggests follow-through.

Last week, we discussed micromovements, a small step towards accomplishing an important task. Is the single most crucial micromovement the act of getting ready? Clearing your desk for an important meeting, finding the right shoes for a hike, packing the car for a trip; these bits of momentum are required to accomplish your task. Without them, we are stuck in the paralyzation of unrealized hopes.

The Israelites have been turning in circles in the desert, waiting to shed their past mistakes. They have been stuck for forty years, lodged between their expectations and disappointment, between hope and despair. That isn't easy to overcome. The massive, immobilized encampment of wanderers will require micromovements if they ever hope to cross the Jordan River.

Realize the fresh air Joshua's words and actions blow into the lives of these nomads. He gives simple directions that break the inertia and shake the rust free. "Get your provisions ready," he instructs. Make your bed. Find your shoes. Pack your lunch. We are going to work. In three days, we will cross the Jordan River. The mood is bright. The warriors are excited and ready. The people pledge to follow Joshua's lead and urge him to be bold, strong, and courageous.

Finally, borrowing from Moses's example, Joshua appoints two spies to cross the Jordan to scout the imposing city of Jericho, which lies directly on the other side. This move may seem curious. Surely Joshua realizes it will be the power of God that gives them the land. Why the need for planning, preparation, or strategy? Just pray and let God do His thing, right? No, he will give God every ounce of his energy, brightest thinking, and careful, purposeful planning. Joshua is fully engaged in the cause of God.

There are direct parallels between God's movement from Sinai across the Jordan and the journey of God's people today. It is easy to feel that the church is stuck and hopeless. Sometimes, I wonder if we are going forward or backward. This is a matter of prayer. But it is also a call to preparation, to make our bed, send out some spies, and get ready. We know that God is up to something. And He invites our involvement. He takes joy in our best efforts. Our participation in the cause of God starts with single steps, micromovements. These steps add together and change the earth on which we walk. Our simple preparation makes an impact.

1. Compared to those around you, does it take you more or less time to get ready to "go?" Why do you think that is?
2. What are some of your best habits? How do they make your life easier or better?
3. What is a habit you would like to adopt? Is there a habit you would like to break? How are you planning to do that? What would you like to say to Jesus about these things?

Day 19 – Purify Yourself

Joshua 3:1-5

Early the next morning Joshua and all the Israelites left Acacia Grove and arrived at the banks of the Jordan River,

where they camped before crossing. Three days later the Israelite officers went through the camp, giving these instructions to the people: “When you see the Levitical priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD your God, move out from your positions and follow them. Since you have never traveled this way before, they will guide you. Stay about half a mile behind them, keeping a clear distance between you and the Ark. Make sure you don’t come any closer.”

Then Joshua told the people, “Purify yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do great wonders among you.”

It is now just one day before the long-anticipated crossing. As many as two million people have readied their provisions and prepared for the trip. But, for several reasons, it still seems impossible. The anticipation and pent-up longing have built for forty years. Their respected leader has died. They are blocked by a two-mile-wide river overflowing its banks during flood stage (Joshua 3:15), and, should anyone successfully swim across, they would be met by the hostile warriors of Jericho as they emerged soggy and exhausted. How can this work?

Have you ever noticed how easy it is to paint a bleak picture of tomorrow? The bills won’t be paid, or the job can’t be done. There are unfixable relationships and depression we can’t see through. Our hopes seem impossible. But there can be immeasurable power in changing one single detail in the story of our lives. And that is about to happen to this vast swarm of Hebrews.

Two final points of preparation emerge from our passage. The first is the challenge of keeping your eyes on the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant and following them

wherever they go (a half mile behind). This Ark encapsulates the presence of God, both symbolic and literal. Usually, this tabernacle furniture sits secluded behind the fabric walls of the most holy place where God's presence rested upon it as a glowing fire beyond the gawking eyes of the masses. Its rare appearance makes it easy to ask the crowd to keep their eyes on the Ark and follow the priests as it emerges into the sunlight. But don't miss the point. The movement of God's people must always be characterized by keeping our eyes on Jesus, letting Him lead, and following wherever He goes. This is an act of patience and submission. We move as He moves. We go where He goes. We must always submit our strategies, programs and plans to the movement of the Holy Spirit.

The final point of preparation? *"Purify yourselves."* This command carries an uncomfortable tone. It suggests that the Hebrews are dirty and need to be cleaned. They are in the wrong and require forgiveness. I'm not sure how we became this way, but you can start a fight with these words today. However, we must consider this challenge as we scan the horizon of our hopes for our church and communities. As we peer across the surging river that blocks our progress into the places God intends us to go, we must pause, confess our sins and shortcomings, and lay claim to the gift of forgiveness. This changes everything, even if by one tiny detail. For God is up to something special. He has a gift to uncover in the next few footsteps.

Tomorrow is going to be different.

1. Do you consider yourself to be an optimist or a pessimist? Are there areas of your life where this isn't true?

2. What is something that is blocking the way to your hopes or dreams? How long has this been so? What do you want to say to Jesus about this?
3. Is there something you should confess to Jesus and ask Him for forgiveness? How would it feel to be clean and free from this burden?

Day 20 – Dry Ground

Joshua 3:14-16

So the people left their camp to cross the Jordan, and the priests who were carrying the Ark of the Covenant went ahead of them. It was the harvest season, and the Jordan was overflowing its banks. But as soon as the feet of the priests who were carrying the Ark touched the water at the river's edge, the water above that point began backing up a great distance away at a town called Adam, which is near Zarethan. And the water below that point flowed on to the Dead Sea until the riverbed was dry. Then all the people crossed over near the town of Jericho.

This is the day. You know the feeling of waking up with anticipation because it is your birthday, Christmas, or graduation. That is the mood of the Children of Israel as they

see the Levite Priests emerge from the Tabernacle carrying the Ark. The massive crowd of Hebrews gives the priests a half-mile headstart as instructed and sets out behind.

In contrast to Joshua at the Jordan River, Moses approached the Red Sea to lead the exodus of these people from Egypt, raised his hands, and God parted the waters for their passage. This is the way I prefer things to happen. God provides the miracle. It is evident and clear. We wait on the dry shore until He miraculously parts the water. Not so for Joshua and God's people moving across the Jordan.

The first difference between these two stories is that Joshua isn't at the front of the line. He will lead with power and the undeniable stamp of God's approval. This event will result in the people's complete allegiance being transferred from their loyalty to Moses. Joshua follows God's unique instructions. Those carrying the symbol of God's presence, the Ark, will go first. The second profound difference is that these representatives are asked to wade into the floodwaters of the Jordan before God acts. Do the first priests into the water need to go ankle, knee, or waist deep? Will the rushing waters threaten their balance? How long is the interval between these first soggy footsteps and the river backing up?

The moment comes in full view of the waiting crowd. This is no minor miracle as the waters roll back under the priests' feet. Commentators suggest the effect is a 120-foot wall of water, 2 miles wide, creating at least 20 miles of dry ground as the people of God move across into Canaan. The priests position the Ark in the middle of the river as this organized march commences. There is no need for single file lines. The highway God has created is ample for His people to move quickly.

There it is. One detail changed. Forty years earlier, God had given the gift of entry into the Promised Land. But the people equivocated in fear. They couldn't see the highway ahead of time, so they complained, whined, lost momentum, and stalled. Now, by faith, they stepped into the rushing unknown and laid claim to the miracle God had always intended. Undoubtedly, the words of Joshua 1:3 rang in their ears, *"Wherever you set foot, you will be on land I have given you."*

1. What are some of the tasks you need to complete today? Do you have clarity on how to do them? How does that make you feel?
2. On a scale of 1-10, how easy is it for you to start a task before clarifying all the details?
3. What part of your spiritual journey do you sense God inviting you to step out in faith to see how He will guide you? What would you like to say to Him about this?

Day 21

Small Group Study

I INTRODUCTION

The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion between you and the person you're studying with or with your Connect Group. Feel free to add, subtract, or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

OPEN QUESTIONS

They say that in the US, the number one shared fear is public speaking, followed by death, heights, bugs and insects, and

drowning. What is one of your greatest fears and why? Have you ever had to face that fear? What happened?

HEAD

1. Read Joshua 1:6-9, Numbers 14:30, Joshua 3:14-16, Joshua 1:10-2:1, Joshua 3:1-5, Joshua 3:14-16 together and share any wisdom, insights, or thoughts that come to you from the reading.
2. If I were Joshua, I'd be shaking in my sandals to take over for Moses, the hero. God tells Joshua three times to be strong and courageous, reminds him that He'll be with him wherever he goes. Do you think Joshua heard this speech and stopped worrying or comparing himself to Moses from that moment on? Would you?
3. Think of the Israelite journey out of Egypt on their way to the promised land. What incidents caused them to think about turning back? How much disappointment can one take before giving up? What do you do when you face disappointment? Where do you go for encouragement?
4. Obstacles. The Israelites faced them constantly, as do we. They were told that on the other side of the Jordan River, was the land God promised them. But the Jordan River at flood stage was huge, dangerous. What did the Israelites have to do to trust God and step forward in faith, again? What can we learn from this?
5. Just like God commanded the Israelites to purify themselves before crossing the Jordan River, we too often have things that keep us from following God, trusting Him, believing His Word. What kinds of

things get in the way for us? How do we surrender those things to take hold of all that God has promised us?

HEART

1. Have you ever had to move forward in faith, not knowing exactly how things would work out, but convicted that you had to move? What happened?
2. Joshua likely compared himself to Moses regularly, yet comparisons can often keep us from growing, from moving forward, from being creative. How can you and I avoid comparing all the things we know about ourselves (our shortcomings, challenges, sins), from all the things we don't know about someone else (we only see the external, we don't know all that is really happening in their heart or lives)?
3. When you face an obstacle in your life, in your faith, how do you address that obstacle? Is it a sign to turn a different direction? Is it a matter of prayer, trying to find the courage to remove the obstacle? How do you know which route to take?
4. What are some of your own practices of confession? How do you confess? When do you confess? When you do confess, are you able to let it go or do you find it hard to forgive yourself and move on? Would there ever be any advantages of sharing your confession with others?
5. Momentum is one of our core values at Crosswalk. How can we encourage one another to keep moving forward in faith, even when our circumstances seem against us?

HANDS

Think about someone in your faith community that you could encourage this week to keep going, to not give up, to cling to Jesus no matter what is happening, reminding them that He is always with them, will never leave them or forsake them. You can even say you don't know everything going on with them, but you just wanted to share a word of encouragement. Then send them a text, write them a note, or if you're comfortable enough, talk to them directly. Encouraging others has a crazy reverse affect of encourage us as well.

LIVING WORDS FOR YOUR WEEK

“So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.”

1 Thessalonians 5:11 NLT

Week 4: The Battle of Jericho

Day 22 – Monuments

Joshua 3:17-4:7

... the priests who were carrying the Ark of the LORD's Covenant stood on dry ground in the middle of the riverbed as the people passed by. They waited there until the whole nation of Israel had crossed the Jordan on dry ground.

When all the people had crossed the Jordan, the LORD said to Joshua, 2 “Now choose twelve men, one from each tribe. Tell

them, “Take twelve stones from the very place where the priests are standing in the middle of the Jordan. Carry them out and pile them up at the place where you will camp tonight.”

So Joshua called together the twelve men he had chosen—one from each of the tribes of Israel. He told them, “Go into the middle of the Jordan, in front of the Ark of the LORD your God. Each of you must pick up one stone and carry it out on your shoulder—twelve stones in all, one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel. We will use these stones to build a memorial. In the future your children will ask you, ‘What do these stones mean?’ Then you can tell them, ‘They remind us that the Jordan River stopped flowing when the Ark of the LORD’s Covenant went across.’ These stones will stand as a memorial among the people of Israel forever.”

Everything has built up to this, the moment the Israelites would stand on the opposite shores of the Jordan. It is what these wanderers dreamt about during long nights circling the wilderness. God promised this day. But forty years ago, their courage flagged, and they delayed. Now, they step out of the riverbed of their past failings and into the promises of a land flowing with milk and honey.

The river Jordan is more than a minor obstacle. It represents their lack of faith in years gone by, every rebellious word or hesitation. Its rushing waters, swollen and swift, formed an impenetrable barrier to the future they had hoped for. But now, miraculously, it has parted, the ground has dried solid, and these millions pass through, marveling at the walls of water. Almost none of these travelers were alive to experience the parting of the Red Sea. But they have heard the stories. And they know, for sure, that Yahweh is with them, guiding them and protecting them.

At this moment, God instructs that men be chosen from each tribe and sent into the middle of the river to bring out large stones for an altar of remembrance. These will not be the last difficult days the Israelites will experience. Like clockwork, we forget the miracles of the past. Every time we do, our courage sags, and we doubt God's presence and guidance in our current circumstances.

God's most frequent command in scripture is "Remember." When we recall how God has led us in the past, we recalibrate that ours is not an isolated account. We are a part of the grand salvation story of a God willing to go to any length to save us, even a cross. When we recount His presence, follow-through, and loving-kindness, we claim the story of His complete and final rescue. His most significant work is yet unfinished. When we remember, we open our hearts and minds to stepping into the next square foot God is giving us.

Not only does our celebration of God's miraculous presence give us strength to meet our next challenge, but it also has the power to change the lives of our children, neighbors, and communities. So scramble back into the middle of the parted rivers of God's work in your life. Record His acts in your journal, sing them in your favorite praise songs, and tell the stories of what He has done. It may save your children's lives. It could unite your community. Your altar to God's power may ignite someone else's spiritual breakthrough.

1. What is your first memory? Who else was there? What can you remember happened?
2. What is a time someone helped you through something very significant? Have you thanked them?
3. What was a time you felt particularly close to God? Why do you think that was?

Day 23 – Under the Water

Joshua 4:9

Joshua also set up another pile of twelve stones in the middle of the Jordan, at the place where the priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant were standing. And they are there to this day.

By the end of the Jordan crossing, two altars had been erected. God requested the first. So, twelve men retrieved large stones from the river to build this monument. The importance of this altar is recorded in Joshua 4:21-24.

Then Joshua said to the Israelites, “In the future your children will ask, ‘What do these stones mean?’ Then

you can tell them, ‘This is where the Israelites crossed the Jordan on dry ground.’ For the LORD your God dried up the river right before your eyes, and he kept it dry until you were all across, just as he did at the Red Sea when he dried it up until we had all crossed over. He did this so all the nations of the earth might know that the LORD’s hand is powerful, and so you might fear the LORD your God forever.”

Much less is known about the second altar. As mentioned in verse 9, we don’t know if God commanded its construction or if anyone other than Joshua was involved. Honestly, it seems like a strange idea. The first altar will be seen, talked about, and valuable in telling the story of God. The second will soon be buried as the waters of the Jordan return to their flooded banks. Why worry about this hidden memorial?

An interesting historical detail provides a clue to the significance of the second altar. John, the Gospel writer, describes John the Baptist’s early work as occurring in “Bethany beyond the Jordan” (John 1:28). Some manuscripts use the name Bethabara, which means “the place of crossing.” This means Jesus was baptized right where the Israelites crossed the Jordan, near Joshua’s underwater altar.

Whether Joshua understood the meaning or not, the connection is powerful. He chose to leave something behind, to bury his past under the same waters where Jesus (the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew name Joshua) would be baptized as a symbol of His death and resurrection. This odd monument is an invisible reminder that God made a way for us to pass through the murky waters of our lives, leave the guilt, sin, and shame behind, and claim the life Jesus lived on our behalf.

1. What is your favorite way to store memories to share with others (photo albums, videos, keepsakes, etc.)?
2. Have you ever discovered something buried in the ground? What was it?
3. What would you like to bury in the depths of the sea where no one could retrieve it (Micah 7:9)? Why don't you give that to Jesus to care for you?

Day 24 – Superimpose

Joshua 4:19-20

The people crossed the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month. Then they camped at Gilgal, just east of Jericho. It was there at Gilgal that Joshua piled up the twelve stones taken from the Jordan River.

Have you noticed that the instant you power past an obstacle and achieve a victory in your life, you are immediately faced with another, sometimes more significant, problem?

Occasionally, there will be a moment for celebration and a deep breath, Like the Israelites resting a beat to admire the altar they have just erected commemorating the miraculous crossing of the Jordan.

Their backs are to the rushing waters, and their feet are pointed forward in the direction of God's invitation. They camped at Gilgal, sandwiched between the recently crossed river and Jericho's towering city. Briefly, they stand in the "in-between."

Even as the children of God celebrate and rest, thoughts of what awaits them at Jericho rush through their heads, filling their hearts with fear. This imposing city stands as a gateway to the promised land and was a primary culprit in the crippling terror that caused the people to reject entering the land forty years ago. Its walls are fortified, and its people are menacing.

The Hebrews were so concerned about the barrier this city created that days ago, Joshua sent two spies to provide reconnaissance on the dangers. The result? Confirmation that this ragtag group of slave descendants doesn't have what it takes to overpower Jericho. It is impassable and hopeless. The spies barely returned alive (more on that later). Imagine the murmurs as the people gossip about what's next.

Appreciate the irony as Israel pauses between the impossible task of overcoming Jericho and the crossing of the Jordan. Their hands still hold the grit from carrying rocks to build an altar of celebration, and their sandals are dusty from the riverbed, made instantly dry. How quickly do we humans tend to forget the power of God?

You and I are no different. We obsess over today's problem until it becomes yesterday's miracle. Then, we move on to the next difficulty. But I invite you to superimpose the two upon one another. Jericho is meant to be viewed with the altar in the foreground and vice versa. The Israelites are standing at the evidence that the city's walls will fall. So, take a screen

capture of God's gracious acts in your life to carry into the adventure of His calling. Fill your pockets with post-it notes of God's blessings as you face today's challenges. Carry the altar of His miraculous love with you as you face the stack of immovable objects.

1. Go into your phone's photo library and slowly scroll. Notice the faces speaking of blessings in your life. Consider the places where you have felt love and found beauty. Spend a moment thanking God for something specific you see there.
2. What are you currently facing or likely to face that you have no idea how to get through? What would you like to say to Jesus about that?
3. Find a passage of scripture that speaks to God's power over something you are experiencing that can serve as an altar of remembrance and celebration.

Day 25 – Holy Ground

Joshua 5:13-15

Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?"

"Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?"

The commander of the LORD'S army replied, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.

This short vignette reveals a handful of insights into Joshua's psyche. He takes a solitary early morning walk down a foggy pathway between the encampment of those he leads and the city filled with hostile enemies. Rounding a bend in the trail, he notices a shadowy figure with a drawn sword. How would you react? I would likely slow my pace, back up, and extract myself from the situation. Not Joshua. His pace seems to quicken. You can almost hear his sword grate against the scabbard as he readies for the inevitable. Joshua's internal compass guides him straight into the line of fire while muttering, "Alright, here we go. Let's do this."

Two warriors are facing off on an isolated path. This could go either of two ways. If the stranger is an Israelite out on a similar walk, he is on Joshua's side, and this will end peacefully. Otherwise, he is an enemy, and deadly combat will result. Those are the options.

Fast approaching the stranger, Joshua calls out, "*Are you for us or for our enemies?*" The Hebrew of the stranger's response can be translated as "No." As if to say, "*Wrong question.*" It hasn't occurred to Joshua that there could be a third option as to the identity of the stranger who reveals himself as the commander of the army of God. Many scholars believe this is, in fact, Jesus. As He had with Moses, the Heavenly Warrior will soon invite Joshua to take off his sandals and submit himself facedown on this holy ground. Joshua does so with reverence.

If we add up the components of this story, we find a reminder for ourselves. Joshua has just come off the most incredible leadership victory of his life (something his revered predecessor couldn't do). Gearing up for the battle of Jericho, courage courses through his veins. So, filled with bravado, he

asks Jesus Himself if He would like to be on Joshua's team and be under his leadership—wrong question. Jericho is not Joshua's battle, nor are your struggles really your fight. The battle belongs to the Lord. The right question is, "Are you on God's side?"

In our misguided blindness, we become disoriented and forget that our way through today's battles only comes with submission to God. He is our deliverer, not me, not you, and certainly not Joshua.

4. Have you ever been involved in a rescue plan, emergency preparedness procedures, or even helping someone by bringing them a forgotten item? What was that situation? How do you feel in those moments?
5. What person do you lean on if you have a financial problem? A tech issue? Or when you are traveling and need something done at home?
6. Do you find it difficult to accept the assistance of others? How easy is it to turn difficulties over to God? What is one you would like to submit to Him now?

Day 26 – Circling

Joshua 6:1-3

Now Jericho was tightly shut up because of the Israelites. No one went out and no one came in.

Then the LORD said to Joshua, “See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men. 3 March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days.

Maybe you have felt the dissonance of claiming the promises of an almighty God while experiencing persistent, unending problems. Your health fails, your child is bullied, or your finances won't stretch far enough. Someone you love may face the challenge while you watch, pray, and agonize. On good days, you claim God's word and recite His promises. On

bad ones, your footsteps seem to lead nowhere. There is no progress. You are just circling.

As Joshua leads the people, there is a looming, unavoidable problem: Jericho. The city's inhabitants have heard the rumors of Israel, including their miraculous crossing of the Jordan. They sense an attack, but their superpower is fortified city walls within which they have everything they need. They close the gates, bar the doors, and live comfortable, impenetrable lives.

Notice the words of our passage, *“See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands...”* Really? It certainly doesn't seem like it. But remember what God promised Joshua at the beginning, *“Wherever you set foot, you will be on land I have given you...”* (Joshua 1:3). One of the most complex realities of our spiritual journey is to grapple with the time lapse between what God has given and when we fully experience it. Sometimes, the lag is from our lack of faith. Sometimes, God is teaching us important lessons. Yet, other times, the delay is simply beyond understanding.

The Israelites had a history of doubt that led to grumbling, complaining, and falling back from the future God intended. They were used to circling needlessly in a desert of faithlessness. This time, the circling is different. Instead of marching around the city muttering about their problems, they are following Joshua's instructions:

“Do not shout; do not even talk,” Joshua commanded. “Not a single word from any of you until I tell you to shout. Then shout!” (Joshua 6:10)

For six days, the Children of Israel circled the city in silence, claiming God's promise and attempting to see what God had already given them. Each day, they returned to camp in

silence, resisting the habit of reciting their problems to one another. By the seventh day and the seventh trip around Jericho, the people were not circling their problems. The Hebrew community spent that week circling God's promise.

This is the challenge for you and me. There are ample opportunities during the delayed gratification of God's work for us to grow discouraged, lose focus, and become bitter. We struggle to understand and recount our problems to one another. But make no mistake, there is power in the circle. Our choice is between circling our difficulties, obstacles, and problems or circling around the promises God has given us.

7. How positive are you on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 = entirely negative; 10 = absolutely positive)? How does that impact your life?
8. What is a promise you have made? Who did you make it to? How has it gone?
9. What is a struggle you are currently experiencing? What promise can you find in scripture that relates to that struggle?

Day 27 – “But This Time...”

Joshua 6:15-16, 20

On the seventh day the Israelites got up at dawn and marched around the town as they had done before. But this time they went around the town seven times. The seventh time around, as the priests sounded the long blast on their horns, Joshua commanded the people, “Shout! For the LORD has given you the town!”

When the people heard the sound of the rams’ horns, they shouted as loud as they could. Suddenly, the walls of Jericho collapsed, and the Israelites charged straight into the town and captured it.

It must have taken patience and restraint for the people to march around Jericho in silence for six straight days. As they trudge around the circle, the city’s inhabitants gather on the walls to mock the parade of Hebrews. These moments between God’s calling and victory can be painful and cause so much doubt to grow in our hearts. But somehow, faith, strong and unwavering, has welled up in the procession. They are claiming the promise God made one footstep at a time.

We are invited to practice this same strategy in our circling moments. Consider patiently rehearsing the promises of scripture as a buildup to God’s perfect timing. What a remarkable thing to experience growing faith during what others would describe as a delay in God’s goodness. Save your voice from the murmuring and complaining that robs your future. There will come a day when God calls on you to shout as a part of His rescue.

The seventh day arrives, and expectations build. The first trip around the city hasn't tipped off that this day will be different from the previous six. On the third or fifth trip around, the city's people begin to see a different look on the faces of the marchers. Then, on the seventh lap, everything changes.

Our passage says, *"But this time they went around the town seven times."* (6:15). There is tremendous hope in the simple phrase, *"But this time..."* Despite the days of wandering and the delayed victory, there comes a time when God's promises are fulfilled. How many abort the journey one lap short of the falling walls? *"But this time..."* is a challenge to hold on, claim faith, and place your foot on the next dusty step. He has given you the next square foot of your calling.

One final act of trust occurs before the city falls. God has instructed that on the seventh lap, as the priests blow their horns, the people should shout as loudly as possible. As they do, the walls collapse. This feels like a picture of a mom inviting their 3-year-old to help with the cooking or a dad encouraging a child to help build a bookshelf with their play hammer. God does all the heavy lifting. But repeatedly, throughout scripture, He seeks our involvement in His activity. And usually, it involves our voices.

God uses your voice. He is up to something powerful today that may be waiting for you or me to go one more time around the block, storing up the energy to make some noise. As we notice the many things in this world that ought to be different, the needed changes and lives gone wrong, we should repeat God's promises with every footstep and get ready to shout His presence. What a crazy realization. He chooses to link His victory to my voice.

10. Would you say you are a loud or quiet person? What situations bring out the most volume in your voice?
11. What forms of injustice cause you to speak up the most? What would you like to see done?
12. Who are you concerned about today? What promise would you like to claim on their behalf? How might God plan to use your voice to bring victory from this situation?

Day 28

Small Group Study

INTRODUCTION

The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion between you and the person you're studying with or with your Connect Group. Feel free to add, subtract, or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

OPEN QUESTIONS

Have you ever held on to something that is a souvenir or reminder of an amazing experience in your life? If so and you'd be willing to share with the group, show the item and share the story.

HEAD

1. Read Joshua 3:17-4:7, 9, 19-20, 5:13-15, 6:1-3, 15-16, 20 together and share any wisdom, insights, or thoughts that come to you from the reading.
2. Why do you think God has to help the Israelites think of ways to remember the ways in which He's blessed them, guided them, and cared for them in the past?
3. How significant do you think it was for Joshua to build an altar that would eventually be buried? Do you think this helped him move on from his past? if so, how?
4. The Israelites seemed to face one obstacle after another, with little time to celebrate a victory of having overcome one before the next one hits (the

Jordan river crossing meets the battle of Jericho).

How do you think they kept going? How do you and I keep going when faced with one obstacle after another?

5. What significance do you think the encounter with the angel was for Joshua, who had heard of Moses' encounter at the burning bush?
6. Do you think the Israelites were ready to march around Jericho as soon as they heard their instructions, or do you think there was pushback? How often do we hear God's instructions for us and think they make little to no sense? How do we help each other trust in the Lord and move even when what we're told to do doesn't make sense?

HEART

1. What are some of the ways you try to remember how God has led you in the past? If you're willing, share about something you've held onto as a symbol of remembering a special moment in your faith journey.
2. Is there someone in your life that you go to for encouragement, hope, and/or help in your spiritual journey? Are you that person for anyone else? Have you ever felt God tell you, or ask you, to do something that made little to no sense? If so, how did it make you feel and what happened?
3. Can there be anything positive about the obstacles we face in life? Have you ever faced an obstacle that you realized later on helped you prepare for another one?
4. I wonder if the Israelites shouting was akin to worship. Have you ever chosen to worship, instead of sulk, in

the midst of adversity? If so, did it help, or make things worse? Explain.

HANDS

This week, find some time to do some intentional worship. That might be at your faith community, it might be in your prayer closet, or it might be out in nature. But no matter what is happening in your life, and no matter how hard it may be, take time to worship. Listen to or sing your favorite songs. Write a psalm of praise to God for all He has done in your life. Thank Him for creation, for those near you that you love, for the promises you hold dear. Simply, worship Him even if life feels like it's falling apart, and even if there are tears in your eyes. Then reflect on what that experience was like.

LIVING WORDS FOR YOUR WEEK

“Shout with joy to the Lord, all the earth! Worship the Lord with gladness. Come before him, singing with joy. Acknowledge that the Lord is God! He made us, and we are his. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving; go into his courts with praise. Give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good. His unfailing love continues forever, and his faithfulness continues to each generation.”

Psalms 100:1-5 NLT

Week 5: Caleb and Joshua

Day 29 – Rahab

Joshua 6:22-23

Meanwhile, Joshua said to the two spies, “Keep your promise. Go to the prostitute’s house and bring her out, along with all her family.”

The men who had been spies went in and brought out Rahab, her father, mother, brothers, and all the other relatives who were with her. They moved her whole family to a safe place near the camp of Israel.

If you haven’t already, take a moment to refresh your memory of Joshua 2:1-24 which tells the story of two spies secretly sent by Joshua to assess the area around Jericho. It is a dangerous mission before the miraculous Jordan River crossing. As they secret around the city, they are befriended by a prostitute, of all people. But Rahab is more than her mistakes and broken past. Our passage reveals that she has become a believer in Yahweh, the One True God. She invites the infiltrators to stay in the safety of her home built into the walls of the fortified city and, that night shares her faith in their God.

Before the spies went to sleep that night, Rahab went up on the roof to talk with them. “I know the LORD has given you this land,” she told them. “We are all afraid of you. Everyone in the land is living in terror. For we have heard how the LORD made a dry path for you through the Red Sea when you left Egypt... No wonder our hearts have melted in fear! No one has the courage to fight after hearing such things. For the LORD your God is the supreme God of the heavens above and the earth below. (Joshua 2:8-11)

Before the spies successfully escape Jericho and return to Joshua, Rahab will have housed them with hospitality, hidden them from searchers, and lied to the king regarding their whereabouts. She advises their exit strategy and lowers the two men from her window in the city walls. But before she does, she asks them to make a pact. She is confident that the city will fall to the Israelites, and she wants a guarantee that she will be remembered for her commitment to their God. They promise that she and her family will be protected, provided she is committed to their safety.

What an unlikely portion of our story. Yet how entirely predictable that God would connect His plan to this woman of questionable past. You may be tempted to wonder if He really means to use you to advance His kingdom. But when thoughts of doubt enter your mind, remember the name Rahab. This woman who turned her history of hiding and secretive behavior into service of Yahweh boldly counters our inner voices of skepticism. Her example makes you wonder how many times the work of God pivots on the faith of the undesirable, the inexperienced, or the outcast. Indeed, He has plans to use you and me.

1. Who is a person who has surprised you by exceeding your expectations? Why did you have low expectations? What do you think of them now?
2. Was there a time you acted in faith despite a lack of experience or expertise? How did it go?
3. What part of your past would you like Jesus to redefine? Is there a way you sense He plans to use a difficulty you have experienced for His Glory? What is that?

Day 30 – The Scarlet Cord

Joshua 6:17-18, 21

Before they left, the men told her, “We will be bound by the oath we have taken only if you follow these instructions. When we come into the land, you must leave this scarlet rope hanging from the window through which you let us down.

“I accept your terms,” she replied. And she sent them on their way, leaving the scarlet rope hanging from the window.

Rahab, an unlikely follower of the Hebrew God, can't possibly know the depths of the deal she has struck. As the walls fall and Jericho is overrun, she and her family wait for help to come to her home. The two spies she recently harbored arrive to rescue them and move them to safety near Israel's encampment.

That isn't the end of Rahab's story. Matthew begins his Gospel by listing the lineage from Abraham through David and on to the Messiah, Jesus Christ. In the fifth verse of his first chapter, he comes to Boaz, David's great-grandfather, and includes the sidenote that Boaz's mother was this same

Rahab. She is David's great-great-grandmother, or, in other words, Jesus was a descendant of Rahab, the prostitute.

Through belief in Yahweh, Rahab has moved from the whispered shadows of a tragic past into the lineage of Christ. As Ephesians 2:13 says, "...now you have been united with Christ Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to him through the blood of Christ."

It is significant to notice that the scarlet rope used to lower two spies to freedom is the mark of Rahab's salvation. Our minds scroll back to the night before the Israelite nation escaped from Egypt and the angel's warning to identify their families with the scarlet blood of a lamb painted across their door frames. Though she doesn't know the name of this future grandson, she, like the Hebrew slaves, is claiming the blood of Jesus as the rope drips from her window.

1. What is your favorite color? What emotion, item, or action do you associate with that color?
2. What different ideas do you associate with the color red?
3. Take a moment to repeat in your mind that Jesus has chosen you, that you have been adopted into the family of God. How does knowing that you are God's child and not an outsider make you feel?

Day 31 – Dividing the Land

Joshua 14:6-9

Now the men of Judah approached Joshua at Gilgal, and Caleb son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite said to him, "You know

what the LORD said to Moses the man of God at Kadesh Barnea about you and me. I was forty years old when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadesh Barnea to explore the land. And I brought him back a report according to my convictions, but my brothers who went up with me made the hearts of the people melt with fear. I, however, followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly. So on that day Moses swore to me, ‘The land on which your feet have walked will be your inheritance and that of your children forever, because you have followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly.’

One final story as we conclude this study of Joshua. In Joshua chapter 14, significant portions of the land of Canaan have been conquered and are being given, tribe by tribe, for the people to inhabit as a gift from God. But the largest of the tribes, Judah, has yet to receive its territory. Only one elder statesman other than Joshua survived the wilderness wandering. Imagine the scene in which Caleb leads a delegation representing his people to his old friend.

The conversation that follows is more than a trip down memory lane. With earnestness, Caleb takes Joshua back half a lifetime ago, when the two young explorers attempted to persuade their countrymen to move forward into the land God had promised. And then the punchline, “Joshua, you remember a promise was made to me.”

The next two verses of the passage seem as unlikely as they are interesting:

“Now then, just as the LORD promised, he has kept me alive for forty-five years since the time he said this to Moses, while Israel moved about in the desert. So here I am today, eighty-five years old! I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out; I’m just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then.” (Joshua 14:10-11)

It isn’t possible that Caleb is the one human we know whose aging process hasn’t affected his physical abilities. But what if he isn’t talking about physicality? Could he be talking about faith in the promise of God through the words of Moses?

For Caleb, as is often the case for us, the promise was followed by excruciating delays and painful loss. Many would have stopped believing and wouldn’t be ready to go on the attack forty-five years later. So, what if Caleb knew all along that it would be God who gave him the places he set his foot? What if the vigor he mentioned was his faith rather than skeletal structure or biceps?

Caleb’s story inspires me. I need to be ready for the long game. The timetable for the fulfillment of God’s promises is not always obvious and never rushed. I want a faith that grows during the wandering. Never forget that God has made you promises. Instead, be strong and courageous.

1. Who are the strongest people you know? How did you choose to define strength in your answer?
2. As you age, what capacities do you think will naturally weaken? Which ones could grow stronger?

3. Is there a promise of God that is easier for you to believe today than it was a few years ago? What promise would you like to be more confident of right now?

Day 32 – Leading From the Middle

Numbers 13:25-28, 30

After exploring the land for forty days, the men returned to Moses, Aaron, and the whole community of Israel at Kadesh in the wilderness of Paran. They reported to the whole community what they had seen and showed them the fruit they had taken from the land. This was their report to Moses: “We entered the land you sent us to explore, and it is indeed a bountiful country—a land flowing with milk and honey. Here is the kind of fruit it produces. But the people living there are powerful, and their towns are large and fortified. We even saw giants there...”

But Caleb tried to quiet the people as they stood before Moses. “Let’s go at once to take the land,” he said. “We can certainly conquer it!”

Let’s travel to Numbers and the story of the twelve spies to fully understand the context of Caleb’s interaction in our previous reading. Here, he has been sent with Joshua and ten other representatives of the twelve tribes of Israel to search out the Promised Land and bring back a report. As Numbers 13 begins, there is no indication that God wants the spies to

evaluate whether or not to proceed. Instead, His command is to send this delegation to explore “the land I am giving the Israelites.” (v2). But, by the time they return from Canaan, there is a split opinion about proceeding. Caleb and Joshua are even more excited about their future, while the others are quaking in fear.

This creates a showdown, with two on one side and ten on the other, as they debate the possibilities in front of the onlookers. Ultimately, the negative voices win, and there is a groundswell of pessimism.

Have you ever been deeply convinced of the direction a group should go, only to find you are in the minority? It can be a gut-wrenching experience. Different options are available if you're the boss or the owner or hold specific power over the group. You might be able to force the group into agreement. But your options are more limited when you lead from the middle, side-by-side with others of equal power. In these cases, you are left to rely on raw influence, the most basic element of leadership. Let's be honest; far more of life's situations have us somewhere in the middle.

So, Caleb and Joshua attempt to persuade through logic and appeal. Their words are passionate enough that it isn't immediately clear which way the group will lean. Slowly and inexorably, the group tips to the negative point of view and makes the wrong decision.

In the coming days, Caleb will reflect on this experience with clarity of conscience and no misgivings. He held his ground in the face of threat and ridicule. He knew his stance

was right with God. And, though it takes decades, God will reward his faithfulness and fulfill His promises.

1. What are the contexts in your life where you have the power to make unilateral decisions without argument?
2. Think of a decision you saw clearly, but because it was a group decision (two or more), you lost the argument, and things went a different direction than you wanted. How did that make you feel? If the results bore out your perspective, how did you react?
3. How difficult is it to express your opinion to a group that has recently rejected your idea(s)?
4. Is there a group you believe God wants your perspective to be heard more loudly? How do you think you should go about that?

Day 33 – The Destructive Power of Negativity

Numbers 13:31-14:6, 9

But the other men who had explored the land with him disagreed. “We can’t go up against them! They are stronger than we are!” So they spread this bad report about the land among the Israelites: “The land we traveled through and explored will devour anyone who goes to live there. All the people we saw were huge. We even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak. Next to them we felt like grasshoppers, and that’s what they thought, too!”

Then the whole community began weeping aloud, and they cried all night. Their voices rose in a great chorus of protest against Moses and Aaron. “If only we had died in Egypt, or even here in the wilderness!” they complained. “Why is the LORD taking us to this country only to have us die in battle? Our wives and our little ones will be carried off as plunder! Wouldn’t it be better for us to return to Egypt?” Then they plotted among themselves, “Let’s choose a new leader and go back to Egypt!”

Then Moses and Aaron fell face down on the ground before the whole community of Israel. Two of the men who had explored the land, Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, tore their clothing. They said to all the people of

Israel... “Do not rebel against the LORD, and don’t be afraid of the people of the land. They are only helpless prey to us! They have no protection, but the LORD is with us! Don’t be afraid of them!”

“God is in control.”

While this statement is powerfully true, it can be used as a cop-out and an excuse for bad decision-making. If Numbers 13 and 14 teach us anything, it demonstrates that God will allow us to make terrible decisions even when they result in decades of wandering and severe delays in the plans He has for us. This has been true ever since He gave us the power of choice, and sin began.

God wanted the spies to explore the land, gather samples of the crops, and return to describe what it could be like in this new place once He had cleared the way of their enemies. Instead, the nay-sayers eliminated God from the equation and became fixated on how impossible it would be to overcome the giants. When they described themselves as grasshoppers in the view of the Anakites, they inadvertently revealed their view that God is little more than a grasshopper Himself.

Then, having administered a solid dose of fear, negativity did mighty work. Overnight, the people stewed and grumbled and repeated their skepticism. By morning, a full mutiny of Moses’ leadership was swinging into action as he, Aaron, Caleb, and Joshua made last-ditch efforts to persuade the people. But it was too late. As the mob prepared to murder

the two dissenting spies unwilling to join in their fatalistic thoughts, God appeared in a powerful fireball of glory to announce He was putting a stop to the nonsense. God's people would be allowed to shelve His plans in favor of their own, even though it meant He had to wait until that generation passed away.

Just because we are God's people doesn't mean we can't derail His plans. God *IS* in control, but He exercises His authority to give us autonomy and the opportunity to impact His plans. Serving a God who spends His power this way is impressive and humbling. It should also make us cautious about allowing our negativity to run wild.

1. Do you find it easier to say yes or no to ideas presented to you? Why do you think that is?
2. Have you ever been asked your opinion only to find that the person asking has no intention of honoring it? How does that make you feel?
3. What negative thoughts have you struggled with recently? How would you like Jesus to help you with them?

Day 34 – The Hill Country

Joshua 14:9-12

[So Caleb reminded Joshua...] “on that day Moses swore to me, ‘The land on which your feet have walked will be your inheritance and that of your children forever, because you have followed the LORD my God wholeheartedly.’”

“ Now then, just as the LORD promised, he has kept me alive for forty-five years since the time he said this to Moses, while Israel moved about in the desert. So here I am today, eighty-five years old! I am still as strong today as the day Moses sent me out; I’m just as vigorous to go out to battle now as I was then. Now give me this hill country that the LORD promised me that day. You yourself heard then that the Anakites were there and their cities were large and fortified, but, the LORD helping me, I will drive them out just as he said.”

God had said, *“I will give you every place you set your foot.”* He said it to Moses, to Joshua and to Caleb. I believe He says it to us today. God has plans for us to step up and step out. *“Swing your leg and land your foot in the spaces near you.”* Your walk is meant to be unique and your stance

individualized. So, get ready to move. There is an adventurous journey of faith ahead. But before we go, let's wring one more amazing drop from this story.

Notice what Caleb is asking for. The land that is being distributed to the other tribes is free of enemies and ready for inhabitation. But Caleb isn't asking for those territories. He asks for the hill country God promised forty-five years earlier.

The countryside in question contains all of the difficulties that filled Israel with fear in Numbers 14. The cities are fortified, and the terrain is impassable. The ancestors of Goliath fill the land. Caleb is asking to lead his people into the hardest tasks, the most difficult circumstances and impossible situations. His claim is that his faith is stronger than it was forty-five years ago when he was prepared to die for his request to go into the land.

Is this our attitude today? Do we find ourselves inviting God to send us into intimidating challenges? Or are we most prone to ask God to eliminate problems and give us the easy path? Honestly, Caleb's approach inspires me to want to grow into a warrior, less afraid of the hard things. What if we whined a little less when things got tough? Could we stop acting like difficulties were evidence that God has left us or doesn't exist at all?

Lord, please give us the spirit of Caleb. Give us the hill country.

1. What is the hardest work you have ever done? How did it feel to accomplish that?
2. What is something you quit because it was too hard? Did you regret not completing it? Why or why not?
3. What is something difficult that you sense God is inviting you to conquer? What would you like to say to Him about that?

Day 35

Small Group Study

INTRODUCTION

The following is a guide to help facilitate discussion between you and the person you're studying with or with your Connect Group. Feel free to add, subtract, or change questions to fit the conversation, and pray for the Spirit to lead in all things.

OPEN QUESTIONS

Were you ever picked last for a team? If so, why? Or were you ever surprised by someone doing something that you never would have imagined or chosen them to do that thing in a million years (this could be a personal thing, or something you witnessed in the world of sports, or something you learned about in history).

HEAD

1. Read Joshua 6:17-18, 21-23, Numbers 24–28, 30, Numbers 13:31-14:6, 9, Joshua 14:9-12 together and share any wisdom, insights, or thoughts that come to you from the reading.
2. Many would say that Rahab was the last person that would have considered or expected to help the Israelites out. What do you think this experience did for Rahab? Was there ever anyone in your life that would have been the last person you would have chosen for a task, who ended up being the best person to help?
3. Rahab's story, from prostitute to hero, is a great example of how God is NEVER done with any of us. What hope can you find for your own journey through the account of Rahab and the Israelites?
4. Caleb chose to focus not on the obstacles or challenges, but on the God of the universe who had delivered them time and time again. How can you and I help each other stay focused on God, instead of what we see with our eyes?
5. Why do you think the Israelites' faith was so fickle? God had done so many amazing things, supernatural things, but they are so quick to weep and cry and seek to run after the report of the spies in Canaan. Why?

HEART

1. What are some of the promises God has made that you most cherish and remind yourself of, especially when life gets tough?
2. How has God blessed you in this life that you, at one point, never thought was possible?

3. Thank God for Caleb, who chose to see God instead of the obstacles. What are some ways you and I can be a Caleb, today? Are there Caleb's in your community that you could thank and affirm?
4. Moving forward in faith is easier when we do it together, in community, and when we remind each other along the way of all the Lord has done. How do you see this happening in your community of faith? How can you contribute to this in your community of faith?

HANDS

What obstacles are you facing in your life right now? What is holding you back from getting involved in your community, from reaching out to reconcile with the person you've suffered a broken relationship with, from doing whatever hard work that is in front of you today? What promises of God's can you claim that would help you step forward in faith? Take time this week to remind yourself of God's promises, searching through Scripture to see the many ways God has promised to be there for you, in you, never leaving or forsaking you. Then pray for the courage to move forward in faith, and move.

LIVING WORDS FOR YOUR WEEK

"For all of God's promises have been fulfilled in Christ with a resounding "Yes!" And through Christ, our "Amen" (which means "Yes") ascends to God for his glory."

2 Corinthians 1:20 NLT