

UNWAVERING DETERMINATION: JOSHUA 14:1-15

Introductory Activity

Introduce: Tell the story of Gladys Aylward and focus on her determination. (See the attached article from Ligonier.org; <https://learn.ligonier.org/articles/missionary-gladys-aylward>)

Connect: Like Gladys Aylward, Caleb was determined to follow the Lord wholeheartedly. He understood faithfulness and demonstrated it in Numbers 13, when he urged Israel to take the Promised Land in spite of the apparent challenges. He also demonstrated his faithfulness during the years of wandering. In our passage today, his unwavering determination will again be on display. As an old man, he still retains the faith he demonstrated 40 years earlier.

Summarize and Transition: Our passage picks up in chapter 14 of Joshua. Beginning in the previous chapter, the book transitions from conquest to settlement and partitioning of the land. It has been five years since the people crossed the Jordan and conquered Jericho. We will pick up with the apportionment of land to the tribe of Judah and then examine Caleb and his request.

1. OBEDIENCE (JOSH. 14:1-5)

Read (or have someone read) Joshua 14:1-5.

Explain: This passage might seem routine and a little bureaucratic. However, it demonstrates that God acted to fulfill His former promises. We can see this in three ways.

First, we see that it is **An Act of God**. Verse 1 tells us that Eleazar, Joshua, and the family heads oversaw the process of allotment. The presence of Eleazar is telling. He was the son of Aaron and acted as the High Priest of Israel. The presence of the High Priest lends this allotment process an air of religious ceremony. This is not simply a civic ceremony or a series of dictates from the government. It was an act of God. We can see this most acutely in the role Eleazar played in the ceremony.

In verse 2, we see that the apportionment was **An Act Guided by God**. Eleazar played an active role during the wilderness period, but we have not seen him in the book of Joshua before this point. In Numbers 27, God announces the special role he would play as a High Priest under Joshua. In that chapter, God tells Moses to appoint Joshua as the next leader of Israel. At that appointment ceremony, God says of Joshua, "He will stand before the priest Eleazar who will consult the Lord for him with the decision of the Urim." (Numbers 27:21a) We talked about this a few weeks ago. Joshua was the first leader of Israel who was to rely more on the written Word of God, given by Moses, than the spoken word of God. There were times when God did speak to Joshua directly, and there were times

Notes:

This Lesson was created using:

- *Explore the Bible Leader Guide* (ETB LG)
- *Explore the Bible Personal Study Guide* (ETB PSG)
- *Explore the Bible Commentary* (ETBC)
- *Preaching the Word: Joshua* (Preaching)
- *New American Commentary: Matthew* (NAC)
- Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: Joshua (TOTC)

when Joshua had to rely on the revelation of God received during the wilderness era. There were other times when Joshua received no direct word from God, and the answer was not found directly in the Word of God written by Moses. Since Joshua did not have the Holy Spirit, as we do today, he was to go to Eleazar and ask him to inquire of the Lord. Verse 2 reveals Eleazar's role at those times and in this ceremony. He would cast lots to determine the apportionment of the land. Now, this sounds rather random, but it was not. Proverbs 16:33 tells us, "The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord." We do not know how Eleazar determined the meaning of the lots, but we might assume that it was a spiritual gift from the Lord. The point is that God is the one who determined the outcome, and it is God who acted to parcel out the land.

Verses 3-5 provide an explanation of how the land was divided among the 12 tribes. Remember, there were 12 sons of Jacob way back in the book of Genesis. One son, Joseph, ended up as a ruler in Egypt, and the others eventually joined him there. In time, their descendant became an enslaved people. Those people eventually became the nation of Israel, now settling in the Promised Land. If you read about the tribes that grew from the 12 sons, you realize that there were actually 13, and 12 received land. How are there 13, and why did only 12 get land? Well, Joseph's two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, each became a tribe, and they both got land. At the same time, the tribe of Levi did not get any land. Why did they get no land? Well, the answer is **An Act of Provision by God**.

It's a complicated backstory, but first we need to understand that the tribe of Levi had been set aside as a priestly class. Deuteronomy 33:10 tells us that among other things one of their duties was to "teach [God's] ordinances to Jacob and [His] instruction to Israel." Second, we should know that instead of inheriting a portion of land, they received 48 cities scattered around Israel (Joshua 21:41-42). Third, we should realize that the whole of Israel was to help support the tribe of Levi. In Numbers we read, "The Levites will not receive an inheritance among the Israelites; this is a permanent statute throughout your generations. ²⁴ For I have given them the tenth that the Israelites present to the Lord as a contribution for their inheritance." (Num. 18:23b-24a) In not giving them land and instead settling them around the nation, God provided a group of people who could dedicate their lives to the Lord's service and the discipleship of His people. Moreover, God's provision is evident in His command that they would receive a portion of the tithe.

Application: So, what does this all mean for us? First, **God will Act to Fulfill His Promises**. Second, **God will Guide the Process** by which we receive His blessings. Sometimes in life, we might look at our situation and doubt that the Lord will follow through on His Word. We should know that He is always faithful. We also might look at our situation and wonder how in the world God will bring blessing from a certain situation. We should know that our

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ways are not always God's ways, and we can't always see or understand how He is acting to fulfill His promises. Thirdly, we can learn two different truths from the Levites. First, if God calls us to a task, **God Will Provide the Necessary Means to Fulfill that Task**. The Levites did not have everything the other tribes had, but they did have what they needed to fulfill God's call. Moreover, they had *just what they needed* to fulfill that call, cities scattered around the nation.

Discuss: What are some ways a person, family, or church might exemplify this principle? (Not all families or persons have what others have. Instead of comparing ourselves to the Joneses, we should remember that God provides us with what we need to accomplish the call he places on our lives. Remember Gladys Aylward. When she was asked to leave the missionary training school, she determined to move to China. She began saving, and her friends began donating to her cause. Their donations included money and supplies, including a suitcase. As she traveled across Europe and Asia, strangers helped her and provided for her needs. God will provide. It is the same with churches. God calls the members of the local church to reach their Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the Earth. God will require what is needed when it is needed to do that. He will provide the people and money necessary to accomplish the mission, whether the church has an attendance of 50, 200, or 5,000.)

Second, we learn that **God Uses His People to Support Those Called to do God's Work Full Time**. As Southern Baptists, we do this through the Cooperative Program that provides for those participating in and coordinating missions and ministry through our state convention. It also provides for those participating in full-time missions in North America, through the North American Mission Board, and internationally, through the International Mission Board. We also support those called to full-time, vocational ministry through our tithes to the local church and a well-planned church budget. Churches should compensate those God calls to serve in the local church. Some churches can do this by providing a full-time salary, and others supplement the income of a bi-vocational pastor.

Summarize Transition: In this seemingly bureaucratic passage in Joshua, we learn some great truths about God's faithfulness and the means by which God sought to provide discipleship to His people then and to missionaries and ministers today. You might say that God was determined to show His faithfulness to the people through His provision of the land, His guidance of the allotment process, and His plan to provide full-time ministers to the people.

2. DEVOTION (JOSH. 14:6-9)

Read (or have someone read) Joshua 14:6-9.

Explain: Verses 1-5 set the stage for the apportionment of the land. In verse 6, the delegation of Judah comes before Joshua to begin the process. With

them comes Caleb, and he steps up to speak with Joshua first. In his speech, we can see three aspects of Caleb's spiritual life. The first is presented in verses 6-9. In these verses, we see **Caleb's Righteousness in the Past**. He says to Joshua, "You know what the Lord promised Moses...about you and me." Commentator David Howard says that we should read this as a "You (of all people) know." (NAC, 328) He then goes on to recount his and Joshua's faithfulness at Kadesh-barnea. Joshua and Caleb were the two oldest men in Israel. That is a fact because of what happened at Kadesh. We read about this in Numbers 13 and 14. The people had been on the cusp of entering the Promised Land. Twelve spies had entered the land to scout it out. Upon returning, 10 of them urged the people to withdraw and not enter the land because of the dangerous people living there. Two, Joshua and Caleb, had urged the people forward. The nation listened to the ten unfaithful spies and opted not to take the land. In response, God judged the people and condemned them to wander in the wilderness for forty years. During that time, all of the adults in Israel, save Joshua and Caleb, would pass away. Caleb had righteously trusted in the Lord's promise and provision. Yet the people refused to listen.

Discuss: When have you or someone you knew trusted the Lord in the face of overwhelming odds?

Explain: The only way to truly trust the Lord in the face of overwhelming odds is to have what Jackman calls Spiritual Vision. He defines that as "being able to see a situation from God's perspective, based on his self-revelation, and so to be able to go forward into that situation confident that God's purposes will indeed be fulfilled, trusting him and expecting him to work." (Preaching, 145) Sometimes those who have Spiritual Vision are described as idealists or as overly optimistic. That might be what the 10 unfaithful spies might have said about Caleb and Joshua. The ten spies might have called themselves realists. However, Caleb and Joshua were the only realists in the group. They saw the situation as it *really* was. God had the power and provision to keep His promises. The ten "spies were unrealistic when they left God out of the reckoning." (Preaching, 145)

Summarize and Transition: Caleb recalls the past and reminds Joshua that he "followed the Lord my God completely." The NIV translates the word completely as "wholeheartedly." He followed the Lord with his whole heart. He was undivided in his commitment to the Lord. Caleb's righteousness in the past is the reason he can stand before Joshua and claim the promises God made to him in the past. Let's look at the next passage and learn two more things about Caleb's spiritual life.

3. INHERITANCE (JOSH. 14:10-15)

Read (or have someone read) Joshua 14:10-15.

Notes:

Explain: In this passage, we see Caleb's **Readiness in the Present** and his **Resoluteness Regarding the Future**.

Caleb's Readiness in the Present: Caleb was 85 years old, and he was ready to receive God's promise. This promise was a long time coming. For 45 years, Caleb had waited for the Lord to act. This can remind us of another person in the Bible who was given a promise that did not manifest quickly. The book of Genesis tells us the life story of Abram (later Abraham). When God called him to move to Canaan, we learn that his wife Sarai (later Sarah) was childless. In Genesis 15:2-6, we learn that God promises that he will have a child, and from that child will come a great nation. Then, in chapter 16, we learn that Abram and Sarai decide to take matters into their own hands. They determine to provide an heir for Abram by way of Sarai's slave. This does not end well. Eventually, when Abram is 99 years old, God specifically promises Abram a son who will be named Isaac. If we place the story of Abraham next to the story of Caleb, we can contrast the two men's patience. Both are declared righteous in the Bible, but one exhibited more patience. Caleb lived quietly in the background during the wilderness era and the conquest. He quietly waited for God to fulfill His promise. Now in Joshua 14, he is ready to receive God's promise. He is not only ready spiritually, but also physically.

In verse 11, he says, "I am still as strong today as I was the day Moses sent me out. My strength for battle and for daily tasks is now as it was then." He is a "vigorous octogenarian" (Preaching, 150), and he gives God the credit for maintaining his health. (See ETBC, 67) This is an essential element of the narrative that we should not skip over. When God made the promise to Caleb 40 years before, God knew that Caleb would be an old man when they entered the Promised Land. Therefore, it appears that God helped ensure Caleb's physical readiness for the battles to come. We see again that God is faithful to bring about His promise. The promise to Caleb included fighting in the conquest. Therefore, God made sure he was ready for the fight. Whatever God promises us, God will make sure we are ready to receive that promise. Moreover, whatever God calls us to do, He will make sure we are ready to do it. Now, we should assume that Caleb continued to live faithfully before the Lord for those 40 years. We can also assume that Caleb did the physical work necessary to maintain his strength.

Discuss: How can we do our part to ensure we are ready to receive God's promises and His ministry challenges?

Explain: Caleb most assuredly did the work necessary to prepare for the battles to come. When God makes us a promise, we should respond not by tapping our watch and waiting on God to act. Instead, we should live steadfast lives and continue to follow God wholeheartedly until God acts. When God issues a ministry calling, we should do what we must to prepare. When God called Gladys Aylward to China, she did not know that her work would include trekking across mountains to save over 100 children from an

invading army. But she did do the work of learning the language, building good relationships, and working diligently to respond to the ministry opportunities before her. Like her and like Caleb, we should prepare for the ministry before us. We should save financially. We should learn to share the gospel. We should learn to study and explain the Scriptures because even if God does not “call us to ministry,” He has called each of us to the ministry of evangelism and disciple-making. When we prepare, we will see God act. Caleb knew that it was God who provided the strength he would need in the end. Caleb was ready, but Caleb was also willing. He wanted to go fight.

Calbe’s Resoluteness Regarding the Future: In verse 12, Caleb asks Joshua to give him the land God promised *and* the challenges. God had promised Caleb the land just as He had promised the entire nation the land of Canaan. Both required fighting. Calbe resolutely set his face toward the battles to come. The details provided in verse 12 reveal Caleb’s resolute confidence. He highlights two major challenges: the Anakim who lived there and their fortified cities. This again should draw our minds back to the events at Kadesh-barnea 40 years prior. In Deuteronomy 1, Moses recounts the people’s response to the report given by the 10 unfaithful spies: “Where can we go? Our brothers have made us lose heart, saying: The people are larger and taller than we are; the cities are large, fortified to the heavens. We also saw the descendants of the Anakim there.” The Anakim and their fortified cities scared the people. At Kadesh, “[their] eyes were on the giants, but Caleb’s were on the Lord.” (Preaching, 144) And now Caleb is eyeing the giants. He is like a horse in the gate, just waiting for Joshua to let him go. The people who had scared the nation back then never scared him. Now he is ready to prove that the power of God that was available then would be on full display now. When he says that “perhaps that Lord will be with me,” it is not a statement of doubt. Instead, it is a faith-filled acknowledgment that God will be the one who drives out the Anakim. Caleb is resolute about the future because he knows God is powerful to fulfill His promises.

Notes:

Summarize and Transition: In response to Caleb’s request, Joshua blesses him and gives him the land. We read about Caleb’s conquest of the land in Joshua 15:13–19 and Judges 1:12–15. We also learn that the next generation was faithful to the Lord and had success as well. It was a long time coming, but Caleb received the promise of God. He acted faithfully in the past; he remained faithful so that he would be ready; and he resolutely set his face to the work ahead. We can look to Caleb as an example. However, we should look to him as an example of faithfulness in response to God’s promises and power. God is the main character in the book of Judges, and Caleb’s faithfulness again highlights this truth.

CONCLUDE

The key component to the entire lesson is the truth Caleb reveals in Joshua 14:8. He says that he followed the Lord wholeheartedly. This means he followed the Lord with his *whole* self. It also means he followed the Lord with an *undivided* heart. If we are to see God act in ways similar to Caleb, we must do the same. Everything we do, work, play, or rest, must be done for God and His Kingdom. Moreover, we cannot divide our lives into silos or different spheres. As disciples of Jesus, we must remember that we are **always** disciples of Jesus and we are His ambassadors wherever we go and whenever we are.

Challenge: Make a point this week to see yourself as an everywhere, all-the-time ambassador of Jesus. Like Gladys Alyward, determine to live for Christ and answer His call wherever you find yourself.

Who was Gladys Aylward

<https://learn.ligonier.org/articles/missionary-gladys-aylward>

Gladys Aylward was a determined woman. Once she felt the call to the mission field, she refused to allow any excuses to hold her back. Although she appeared to lack the resources for mission work, God affirmed her calling and gave her many opportunities to overcome practical obstacles.

1. Early Life

Gladys was born in Edmonton, a town north of London, in 1902. Growing up in a churchgoing, working-class family, Gladys left school at the age of fourteen. She found that working as a parlor maid in the big London houses was more to her taste than school. The work was hard, but she enjoyed living the life of the rich vicariously.

One evening, Gladys, in her mid-twenties, went to a revival meeting. Unsure why she had chosen to attend, she found herself being challenged by the gospel. By the time she left the meeting, she had become a Christian. The focus of her life changed completely. She joined Young Life Campaign and spent her off days learning to share the good news of Jesus. Through one of their magazines, she learned about the many people in China who had never heard the gospel. Feeling the call to go, she presented herself as a candidate to the China Inland Mission in 1929. They accepted her into their training program despite her poor education and her being in her late twenties. However, after three months she was asked to leave because, even though she had excelled in the practical work, she had failed the classroom work. The Mission felt she could not be adequately prepared for the mission field.

Disappointed but undeterred, Gladys went back to working as a maid, determined to earn the money needed to travel to China. She asked God to clear the way for her, and He did. She managed to earn and be given enough fare money in one year instead of the three she had calculated. Friends and employers gave her necessary items such as clothing, a suitcase, and a small stove. Finally, missionary Jeannie Lawson had written the congregation asking for a young woman to help her mission work in Yangcheng in northern China.

2. To China

The train trip across Europe and Asia on her own in 1932 was fraught with danger, but God supplied strangers who took Gladys under their wing until she arrived at the border between Russia and China. War was raging between the two countries, and Gladys was caught in the middle. She was briefly arrested, questioned, and released, but she still couldn't get to China. Then, a kind stranger got her passage on a ship to Japan, and from there she was able to continue.

Finally arriving at her destination, Gladys discovered that Jeannie Lawson's mission was an inn for muleteers who stopped overnight on their trade routes. From the beginning, Jeannie and Gladys did not get on. Jeannie, a demanding elderly woman, put Gladys in charge of the mules instead of the people. Tempers flared when Gladys complained. After a few months of conflict, Gladys left. But she returned to nurse Jeannie when she fell ill and eventually died.

3. Influence

Even though Gladys was told she could never learn the Chinese language, necessity made it possible. Gladys learned the country dialect from her customers so that she could share the gospel with them. Her stories about Jesus began to garner interest in the town too, so that large crowds would gather in the evening to hear the small woman speak. Even the mandarin of the town was interested and invited her for a meal. Not used to people standing up to him, she startled him by disagreeing with him about his religion. However, as he

watched Gladys at her work, he was touched to see her take in abandoned children, as well as offering basic medical care to any who came to her. Eventually, he became a Christian.

By 1936, Gladys felt so much at home in Yangcheng that she decided to become a Chinese citizen. Pleased with this decision, the mandarin offered Gladys the job of foot inspector. Foot binding of young girls' feet had been banned but not actively enforced, and Gladys was called upon to ensure the decree was being followed. Through this opportunity, she was allowed to visit every home and share the good news about Jesus. Gladys praised God as she tramped through the mountain passes to remote villages she had never visited before.

One day, the mandarin called on her to stop a prison riot. Gladys, only four foot ten inches, stepped into the prison and began to listen to the complaints of the criminals. When she saw the appalling conditions they lived in, she promised to ask the mandarin to improve them and find useful work for the prisoners to fill their days. Satisfied, the prisoners returned to their cells.

War with Japan broke out in 1938. At first, Yangcheng was not affected, but then the bombs began to fall nearby. By this point Gladys had accumulated one hundred abandoned or orphaned children, ranging from toddlers to teenagers. As the fighting moved closer, Gladys knew she would have to leave and get her children to safety. While she considered the best place to go, the Japanese closed the roads around the town. Having lost that escape route, Gladys looked to the mountain pathways, which she now knew well. The mandarin, pleased with her plan, offered her food supplies and soldiers as bodyguards for part of the way.

The twelve-day journey was difficult as the food ran out and the rough paths slowed the children down. However, God provided help along the way. A Buddhist priest allowed them to sleep in his temple one night. Another night, a group of Chinese soldiers fed and guarded them while they slept. But when they finally reached the Yellow River, Gladys broke down in tears. All the boats were gone. Some of her children came to her, asking her to ask God to part the waters for them as He had for the Israelites. Admonished, Gladys called her children together to pray and sing hymns. A Chinese officer heard the music and came to investigate. Hearing their story, the officer signaled for the boats to return, and Gladys and the children were taken to the other side. Gladys was ill by this time, and the rest of the journey by train passed in a blur. Finally arriving at Fefung, the children were placed with people to care for them. Gladys, ill with typhus, was sent to the hospital.

4. Final Days and Legacy

It took months for Gladys to recover. Still in a weakened state, she was flown home to London. When her health improved, she was able to take speaking engagements at various churches, telling them about the needs in China. But she was uncomfortable in Western culture and decided to return to China. When the Communists gained power in 1949, Gladys was forced to leave. She moved to Taiwan and established the Gladys Aylward Orphanage, taking in abandoned children. She worked with the poor and also founded the Gladys Aylward Children's Home. She died at the age of sixty-seven in 1970.

Once Alan Burgess' biography *The Small Woman* was published in 1957, Gladys Aylward became popular, much to her discomfort. Hollywood, too, publicized her through a movie called *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness*, a highly romanticized version of her journey through the mountains. Gladys appeared to be an unlikely candidate for mission work, but God chose her and gave her the determination to do the work.