

MOVING AHEAD TOGETHER WITH
A WINNING MINDSET

STUDY NINE

A Choice You'll Never Regret

Joshua 24:14–18, 23–29

Make a choice you will never regret—put the Lord God first. First in plans, first in priorities, first in honor, first in everything.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

THE book of Joshua opened with the Israelites outside the promised land looking in. The book closes with the Israelites settled in the promised land and looking back . . . battles won, enemies vanquished, territory claimed. From Egyptian slaves to desert nomads to citizens of their own nation, God's people were finally home and feasting at God's table of blessings.

The LORD gave them rest on every side, just as he had solemnly promised their ancestors. . . . Not a single one of all the good promises the LORD had given to the family of Israel was left unfulfilled; everything he had spoken came true. (21:44–45)

Rest. The word communicates a happy-ever-after ending to a long, arduous journey. And yet, "Rest is not the final word for life in the land," commentator Trent Butler observes.

Temptation lurks in the presence of the gods of the peoples remaining in the land. Blessing can last only as long as total faithfulness to Yahweh lasts.¹

Invisible enemies with weapons far more deadly than swords lay in wait to ambush the Israelites' souls. In his farewell address, aging Joshua warned the people against worshiping idols and issued a clear challenge to serve God alone and put Him first in every part of their lives.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Are you enjoying a season of rest and blessing? As you open God's Word, thank the Lord for His gracious provision, and invite Him to deepen your devotion.

Father, You have showered favor on me through Your Son—assurance of eternal life, a home in Your kingdom, a secure identity as Your child. Stir in my heart an even stronger commitment to You as I study Joshua's final words. In Jesus' name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

When people near death, they measure their words carefully, condensing a lifetime of experience into droplets of pure wisdom to share with those they love. Joshua “was now very old” (Joshua 23:1)—110 years old. Sensing the chill of death's shadow, the revered commander-in-chief summoned the leaders of Israel so he could pour precious words of counsel into their hearts.

What central message did he give them in *Joshua 23:6–11*?

Warnings about breaking the Lord's covenant and serving other gods followed in *23:12–16*. And then he dismissed the leaders . . . but he wasn't finished. Next, he summoned the entire nation to Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim to speak wisdom from the Lord.



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Observation: Joshua's Final Address to the Nation

Years earlier, Joshua brought the people to Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim after the victory at Ai (Joshua 8:30–35). On these side-by-side hills, the people committed to serve God and obey His laws. Joshua was 80 years old then, and the land had yet to be won. Now, thirty years later, the land was conquered and settled. With his life's work coming to an end, Joshua brought the people full circle—back to where it all began—to renew their commitment to God.

Begin observation with a slow reading of *Joshua 24:1–28*. Note the personal pronouns in *24:2–13*. Take notes below, summarizing Yahweh's message to the people.

List Joshua's main calls to action in *24:14–15*.

How many times did the Israelites answer in *24:16–24*? What did they say?



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How did Joshua memorialize their covenant in *Joshua 24:25–28*? For what purpose?

The final section of the book records Joshua's death with this simple line: "Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of 110" (24:29).

This epitaph captured well the essence of Joshua's life: *the servant of the LORD*. Along with Caleb, Joshua was the last living Israelite born as a slave in Egypt. His back still bore scars from Egyptian whips. With firsthand knowledge, he spoke of the hushed hurry of Passover night, the mighty wind of God pushing back the Red Sea, and the surge of waves consuming the Egyptians. Joshua felt God's holy thunder at Mount Sinai and God's righteous fury when Aaron crafted the golden calf. *Joshua had seen it all.*

Joshua witnessed God's mighty hand at work in Egypt, through the wilderness, and into the promised land, and he never once wavered from his commitment. To the end of his life, Joshua was a true servant of the Lord.

Serve the Lord wholeheartedly. Don't hold back. Train your children in the value of service. Teach them by your model what it means to take time for the things of God. It's not a Sunday religion. It's a lifestyle of faith. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Fear and Serve the Lord

Joshua's final words to the people could be boiled down to two commands: *fear the Lord* and *serve the Lord*.



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To fully grasp the meaning of these concepts, imagine hearing Joshua's address in *Joshua 24:2–13* as if you were one of the Israelites listening to the Lord recounting all He did for His people. Reflecting on *the Lord's authority, providence, and power*, how would the people have understood Joshua's command to "fear the LORD" (24:14)?

Considering *the Lord's gracious and abundant blessings*, how would the people have understood Joshua's command to "serve him wholeheartedly" (24:14)?

Write a principle from your interpretation of these commands. What truth about fearing and serving the Lord can God's people of all eras apply?



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Joshua 24:14–18, 23–29

Joshua memorialized the Israelites' covenant by writing it down and setting up a stone. What principle for Christians can you glean from Joshua's actions?

Go deep enough into idolatry and you will sink into corruption and immorality. You will throw to the winds a pure mentality, and you will adopt a lifestyle that is the opposite of the way God would have you live. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: An Eternal Homeland

God's gift of a home to Israel gives us a glimpse of the eternal homeland God will one day deed to His people. The writer of Hebrews developed this theme in the last three chapters of the letter. First, read [Hebrews 11:8–16](#). Describe what God promised Abraham. Did Abraham ultimately receive what God had promised?



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Now, read *Hebrews 12:18–24*. What covenant guarantees our homeland? Who purchased it and how? How do we memorialize this covenant (*1 Corinthians 11:23–26*)?

Because we have this covenant, how should we respond to God according to *Hebrews 12:28*?

“This world is not our permanent home; we are looking forward to a home yet to come,” the writer to the Hebrews declares with hopeful anticipation (13:14). He concludes with a challenge in *13:15–16* that echoes the spirit of Joshua’s final address to the nation. Considering our future hope, how should we live?

I speak to you based on the Word of God that we must choose now. Make a choice you will never regret. Put the Lord first. —Chuck Swindoll



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Application: The Choice You Will Never Regret

Joshua's challenge calls out from the pages of Scripture: *Choose today whom you will serve*. The Israelites declared their allegiance to Yahweh . . . only to fall into the trap of idolatry again and again. The book of Judges chronicles Israel's tragic cycle of idolatry, judgment, repentance, deliverance, and then relapse into idolatry.

Does idolatry live on today? It certainly does. We may not sacrifice to idols, but we still feel tempted to pursue our own desires without God. Can you hear the deceptive voices resonating from the temples of modern culture? They tempt you to abandon your faith in God, trust in yourself, control your own destiny, and put yourself first.

Have you sensed the world's idolatrous allure? If so, in what ways do you feel tempted to doubt God's promise to care for you?

Joshua encouraged the Israelites to recall God's providence, power, and goodness: "Every promise of the LORD your God has come true" (Joshua 23:14). Then, Joshua challenged them to fear the Lord and serve Him only. What does his challenge mean to you?



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God gave the Israelites a homeland on earth, but we look forward to a greater, eternal homeland with Jesus—our Savior and King. Do you wish to renew your covenant with Him, *to put Him first in every part of your life*? How can you memorialize your commitment to the Lord?

With his whole heart, Joshua devoted himself to God alone. “As for me and my family,” he resolutely declared, “we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15). Joshua never regretted his choice, and neither will you.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I commit to serve You alone because only You have the power to protect me from evil's lies and the grace to provide all my needs through Christ Jesus. The kingdoms of this world are mere illusion. Only Your kingdom is real. Only You are worthy of reverence. Keep my eyes on You when doubting voices tempt me. I give my allegiance to You alone because Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. In Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. Trent C. Butler, *Joshua*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 7 (Dallas: Word, 1998), accessed through Logos Library System.

