



# God Calls Joshua

## Key Theme

- God requires and rewards obedience.

## Key Passages

- Joshua 1:1–9; Matthew 4:1–10

## Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Recognize the importance of obeying God’s commands.
- Describe how Jesus is an example of obeying God’s commands.



## Lesson Overview



### Come On In

Students will place bookmarks at Joshua 1 and Matthew 4.

Students will put the Memory Verse Strips in order and then practice saying the verse together and/or with a partner.

- Cut paper into strips for each student to mark today’s study passages.

- Print and cut out the Memory Verse Strips from the Resource DVD–ROM for each student. Put complete sets into envelopes or small plastic bags.



### Studying God’s Word

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God called Joshua to take the Israelites into the Promised Land. God promised to be with Joshua, warning him to obey all the commandments given through Moses in order to receive the help and blessing he would need from God. Jesus also had to obey God’s commands in order to provide our redemption. He is our example of obedience and reliance on God’s Word for strength when we are tempted.

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.

- Read through Joshua 1 and Matthew 4:1–10



### Activity: Back It Up

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Students will examine several scenarios and identify passages of Scripture that give guidance on dealing with the situation. Knowing the truth is a key to living obediently.

- Student Guides

- Pencils



# Prepare to Share

## SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Before you begin to prepare for your lesson this week, please prepare your heart and mind by reading 1 Samuel 13:1–15 and 15:10–31. Prior to this account, the people had demanded a king so they could be like the other nations (1 Samuel 8:5). God demands that His people worship Him alone as king; He will not share His glory with another (Isaiah 42:8). In demanding a man-king, the people were rejecting God and His kingship. God warned them that life would not be easy for them under worldly kings, but they would not listen. Now Israel was to be under human kings for the next 400 years. Saul was chosen by God to be the first king of Israel (1 Samuel 9:17).

Our passage today in 1 Samuel 13 picks up two years after Saul became the king. Israel was afraid of the multitude of Philistines who seemed about to attack. Saul was in Gilgal, and the people with him were trembling with fear (1 Samuel 13:7). Saul felt the need to offer a burnt offering to request the Lord's protection in the coming conflict. However, Samuel, as the Lord's priest and prophet to Israel, had told Saul to wait for him seven days (1 Samuel 10:8), and Samuel had not yet arrived.

Disregarding Samuel's instructions, Saul decided that it would be better to offer the sacrifices himself rather than to wait for Samuel (1 Samuel 13:9). This might appear reasonable. Saul was apparently seeking to honor the Lord and seek His protection, and the the people were scattering from him (1 Samuel 13:11). However, when Samuel arrived, he made it clear that Saul had acted foolishly (1 Samuel 13:13). Saul had not obeyed the Lord. In spite of what Saul perceived as real, imminent danger, he should have obeyed and trusted God to prevail. The anxiety and concern Saul felt over the Philistines was the product of his lack of trust in God, which led to his disobedience. And we will see

that God's priority is always a trusting, obedient heart, not the outward performance of religious duty.

Saul continued to establish his reign over Israel. He fought against his enemies on every side (1 Samuel 14:47–48). He had not, however, learned the lesson of obedience to the God and Creator of all things. The events of 1 Samuel 15 show again Saul's tendency to trust his own judgment rather than to obey God. In this chapter, Israel fought against and defeated the Amalekites. God had clearly commanded Saul to destroy all of that tribe, including women, children, and livestock (1 Samuel 15:3). But again Saul considered his own wisdom above God's wisdom. In disobedience to God's direct command, Saul kept the king and the best of the livestock alive, presumably for the purpose of showing off the defeated king and making sacrifices to God (1 Samuel 15:15). Samuel confronted Saul again with God's priority, declaring plainly that God desires obedience from His people more than even the sacrifices that are meant to honor Him (1 Samuel 15:22). Saul not only disobeyed, but as king, he also set an example for the people of Israel that God would not tolerate trusting self as opposed to trusting God.

Saul suffered severe consequences for his disobedience. The Lord rejected him from being king over Israel (1 Samuel 15:26). The Lord promised that the kingdom of Israel would be taken from him and given to a neighbor who was better than he (1 Samuel 13:14, 15:28). Saul would no longer benefit from the wise counsel of Samuel, his friend and God's prophet and priest (1 Samuel 15:35). The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and a distressing spirit from the Lord troubled him (1 Samuel 16:14).

As we consider the life of Saul and his failure to trust and obey God, we know that the unchanging God still demands obedience from His people. In very simple terms, John 14:15 states this critical biblical principle: "If you love Me, keep My commandments."

A heart that loves God will produce a life that keeps His commands—not perfectly, but characteristically.

## **HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND**

Saul did not realize several things that God intended to accomplish in the commands that He gave. God intended to show the glory of His guardianship of the nation of Israel by the complete destruction of the Amalekites, who had treacherously harried the Israelites after God had delivered them from Egypt (Exodus 17:8–16). This may seem harsh to us, but God intended a particular display in history of His complete and jealous protection of His people, Israel.

Furthermore, God designed Israel's history to prepare the way for the coming Messiah, Jesus. Jesus alone may carry the offices of prophet (His words carry God's authority—Matthew 17:5), priest (He offered Himself for our sins—Hebrews 7:26–27), and king (He is the King of kings—Revelation 19:16). Saul's presumption in performing the role of priest in the sacrifice at Gilgal was contrary to God's purpose to preserve the honor of His Son, who alone is worthy of all of these offices. It is true that Saul may not have understood God's purposes fully, and in that regard, we may find ourselves sympathizing with him. However, the issue that is inescapable is that of simple obedience.

We find ourselves quite often without the ability to see how things will turn out—in situations that make obedience to God seem impractical or (to our minds) impossible. Yet God clearly calls us to obey, and He commands us to obey even (or especially!) when we cannot discern how that obedience will either benefit us or glorify God. Seen in the proper perspective, such a situation is precisely when our trust in God can be fully displayed. It is far easier to obey God when the benefit of obedience is clear. Such obedience coincides with self-interest. In the book of Job, Satan accused Job of

obeying God, not because he loved and trusted Him, but because Job saw that it was in his own best interest to obey (Job 1:9–11). Of course, Job continued to worship God even after everything was taken from him, giving us an example to follow.

The heart that truly loves and trusts God will act in obedience simply because it accepts that God is good and His commands are right, regardless of the apparent outcome. Such obedience demonstrates a heart that believes that God does not need to explain Himself—that whatever He commands is good. In that kind of obedience and trust, God is glorified.

In the end, a disposition of the heart to love God inclines us to honor Him with our obedience, and it is that kind of heart that God seeks. Saul's heart was inclined to obey God in the way that Saul thought best, rather than to unconditionally trust that God's commands were good. We must be careful not to repeat Saul's mistake.

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



### **BEFORE THE THRONE**

Precious Redeemer and Living Word, thank you for providing such a great salvation. How I long for the day when you rule as King. In the meantime, help me and my students to grasp that you desire our obedience above any sacrifice we can bring. Convict us through your Word that we would choose your way over ours—your way, according to your holy Word. Holy God, for the students in my class that don't know you as Lord, please convict them of their sins so they would become truly repentant and long for the forgiveness and the love of the Savior.



## COME ON IN

As students arrive . . .

- They will mark their Bibles at Joshua 1 and Matthew 10 with strips of paper.
- They will put Memory Verse Strips in order and recite the verses together and/or to each other. They may work individually or in teams.

*This time at the beginning of class should be used to review the Memory Verse. We have provided a template on the Resource DVD-ROM you can use to make Memory Verse Strips to be put in order each week. You may have other ideas and ways to encourage your students to memorize the verse.*



## Review

As we begin a new year of lessons, we are going to continue to work through the history contained in the Old Testament. We have spent most of our time over the last year working through the book of Genesis from the creation of the universe, earth, and all of its creatures—including mankind—to the Exodus of the Israelite slaves. When we left the Israelites, they had failed to trust that God would lead them into the Promised Land. After forty years of wandering, and the death of all of the people over 20 who did not trust God, God called Joshua to assemble the Israelites to enter the land He had promised to Abraham's descendants.

? **Who can remember why Joshua was allowed to enter the Promised Land?** *Joshua and Caleb were among the 12 spies who entered Canaan and trusted God to deliver on His promise, in spite of the strength of the people of the land (Numbers 14).*

? **Who had been the leader before Joshua?** *Moses has just died and Joshua was taking his place. Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land because of his sin (Numbers 20:12; Deuteronomy 34).*

The role of leadership had passed from Moses to Joshua, and our lesson today will look at that calling more closely. Joshua had been a servant to Moses for the past forty years and now it was his turn to lead Israel.



➤ Write on the board, "Who is our perfect example of obedience?"



## Studying God's Word

### READ THE WORD

Let's read Joshua 1:1–9 together. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

### EXAMINE THE WORD

#### Observe the Text

? **When is this taking place?** *After the death of Moses.*

- ? **Who is speaking to whom?** *God is speaking to Joshua.*
  - ? **How much land was being given to Joshua?** *North from Lebanon to the Euphrates River, west to the Mediterranean Sea, and all the land of the Hittites was the inheritance. If available, show this area on a map.*
  - ? **What three promises does God make to Joshua in verse 5?** *No man would be able to stand before him; God would be with Joshua just as He was with Moses; God would not leave him or forsake him*
  - ? **What did God mean that He swore the land to the Israelite's forefathers at the end of Joshua 1:6?** *Read that section if necessary. Allow for discussion.*
- God was pointing out that the land is the fulfillment of what He had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob back in the book of Genesis. Refer to the Seven Cs Timeline. God made the promise of this land to Abram in 1921BC. Joshua will finally enter the Promised Land in 1452.
- ? **Who can tell me how many years have passed?** *Allow students to subtract. 469 years.*
  - ? **What command did God repeat three times?** *Be strong and of good courage (v. 6); be strong and very courageous (v. 7); be strong and of good courage (v. 9).*
  - ? **What other commands were given to Joshua?** *To observe all of the commands given by Moses (v. 7); to not turn from the commandments to the right or to the left (v.7); the Book of the Law should be his constant meditation (v. 8).*
  - ? **What benefit would Joshua receive by following these commands?** *Verses 7 and 8 say that Joshua will prosper as he follows God's commands.*

## Discover the Truth

- ? **What is the connection between the commandments of Moses in verse 7 and the Book of the Law in verse 8?** *These are synonyms—the commandments that Moses recorded were found In the Book of the Law (Deuteronomy 31:24–29).*

So, God is calling Joshua to obey the commandments and to meditate on the commands day and night. There must be a connection between obedience and meditation.

- ? **What does it mean to meditate on God's commands?** *To meditate means to think continuously and prayerfully about truth that God has revealed. It does not mean to empty our minds of truth as in the sense of Eastern meditation practices.*

God called Joshua to obey and to meditate on the commands from Moses. By constantly applying his mind to understanding the commands, he would be able to know how to act in certain situations. That is the blessing that God promised—as Joshua obeyed, he would “prosper” wherever he went. The connection is made very clear in verse 8 where God said that “then (after meditating and observing the commands) you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.” Joshua’s success was based in his knowledge of God’s commands and his

OMNIPOTENT

FAITHFUL

SOVEREIGN

obedience to them. If he did not know what God had commanded, how could he obey?

- ? It is clear that God was trying to offer Joshua encouragement. What attributes of God had Joshua experienced that would offer him encouragement? *Joshua had seen God work many miracles (omnipotence); he had seen God fulfill His promises (faithful); he had seen God direct the events of nations (sovereign). Refer to the Attributes of God Poster.*

Knowing all of this, Joshua immediately set things in order to cross over and take the Promised Land—just as God commanded him. If Joshua did not know God’s commands, he could not have obeyed. If he did not obey, the Israelites would not have taken the Promised Land.

Joshua’s obedience to God was blessed as he led the children of Israel into Canaan.



## READ THE WORD

Joshua’s life is one example of obedience for us, but we have an even better example than Joshua. Although Joshua was a faithful man, there is one who was more faithful.

Matthew 4:1-10

Let’s read about that faithfulness to obey in Matthew 4:1–10. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

## EXAMINE THE WORD

### Observe the Text

► Have the students look at and/or reread the verses in order to get the answers from the text.

- ? **When did this event take place?** *Just after the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist, Jesus was taken into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit.*
- ? **How long had Jesus been in the desert without food?** *40 days and nights.*
- ? **Who approached Jesus?** *Verse 3 calls him the tempter, and verses 5, 8, and 11 refer to him as the devil. Then in verse 10, Jesus referred to him as Satan. Point out each of these terms as synonyms for the students.*
- ? **How many times did Satan try to tempt Jesus?** *Three.*

- ? In each response, how did Jesus answer the temptations offered by Satan?  
*He quoted passages of Scripture that refuted Satan's claims and offers.*
- ? What phrase did Jesus repeat in His responses? *"It is written" in verses 4, 7, and 10.*

### Discover the Truth

As Jesus responded to Satan's temptations, He did not come back at Satan with clever Ideas or explanations based on statistics or popular ideas, but He used the words of God.

This is not the only time that Jesus used this tactic. When He confronted false teachers and their teachings, He often quoted passages of Scripture and used phrases like, "Have you not read?" or "It is written."

- ? What is the connection between the Joshua passage that we read earlier and this passage? *God called Joshua to meditate on the Book of the Law so that he would know how to act rightly. By meditating on it constantly, Joshua would be able to recognize truth from error and his life would benefit from obeying God. Jesus had this same attitude and knew that it was the truth of Scripture that could defeat any false argument and discern any error, no matter how subtle, from the truth.*

Jesus used the Scriptures to distinguish truth from error! In order to do that, He had to know what was written in Scripture. Now, it is true that He is God and had an intimate understanding of truth, but in His humanity He had to learn and grow in wisdom (Hebrews 5:8; Luke 2:52).

We are to be imitators of Christ and to be continually seeking to be like Him. We can look to Joshua as an example of obedience and following God's commands. He truly applied himself to understanding God's Word so that he could obey. Likewise, Jesus obeyed the Father and always did the will of the Father (John 8:27–29). Because He lived a life of perfect, sinless obedience, His sacrifice on the Cross was acceptable as payment for our sins. Not only that, but we are credited with His righteousness. Through His obedience we have been redeemed.





# Back It Up

## MATERIALS

- Student Guides
- Pencils

## INSTRUCTIONS

Just like Jesus faced temptations to sin (though He never sinned), we face temptations to sin. How to respond to those temptations is a very important thing for us to consider before we face them. With Jesus as our example, we can look to Scripture to understand how we should respond to such temptations.

In your Student Guides you will find the activity called Back It Up. Just as Jesus was able to back up His thinking with Scripture as Satan tempted Him, we need to be able to do the same. Psalm 119:11 says, “Your word I have hidden in my heart that I might not sin against You.”

*If time is short, do this activity as a group exercise.*

In small groups, look at each of the scenarios in the activity and decide what you should do in order to be obedient to God. Then back up your answer with a passage or two from the Bible. We will

discuss your answers in a few minutes. Give students time to complete the activity.

## CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Let’s take a few minutes to talk about these ideas. As we do, make notes of other passages of Scripture that you hear mentioned. Discuss the questions below. Ask for all of the groups to contribute their verses used to support their position so that all can have a variety of passages to review. The answers listed below are not absolutes and many other passages may be applicable.

1. You get home from the grocery store and you realize that you had accidentally slipped a candy bar into your pocket while you were loading a case of soda pop in your cart. It cost less than a dollar and the grocery store isn’t going to miss it among their millions of dollars. What do you do? *Exodus 20:15 and Ephesians 4:28 make it clear that stealing is a sin. The right response would be to return to the store and explain the situation and pay for the candy bar.*
2. You are running late for school because you hit the snooze button three times. If you cut across a busy street instead of going all the way down to the light and crosswalk, you just might make it on time. And, everyone else jaywalks, so you

probably won't get in trouble. **What do you do?** *God has placed governments in authority and passages like Romans 13:1–7, Titus 3:1–2, and 1 Peter 2:13–16 make it very clear that we are to obey the government God has placed over us. The laws about crossing busy streets at crosswalks are set by the government for the benefit of the society and to violate them is a sin. Especially in light of the laziness that brought about the situation, to jaywalk would be a sin. It would be most honoring to God to acknowledge the consequences of the laziness and to obey the law.*

- 3. While out having pizza with the gals (or guys), several people start talking about how Jill (or Jack) annoys them. Several things pop into your mind as well and you are tempted to share them. What do you do?** *To talk negatively about someone else in their absence is gossip. Gossip is identified as a sin: Proverbs 10:18; Ephesians 4:29; 2 Corinthians 12:20; 1 Timothy 5:13; 2 Timothy 3:3. You could also apply the principle that you should esteem others as better than yourself (Philippians 2:3) and the golden rule (Matthew 7:12).*
- 4. Last week you were sick and didn't make it to Sunday worship. The week before, you were visiting friends and didn't make it to worship. Now, your friend has tickets for the big game and going will mean missing corporate worship again. What do you do?** *In Hebrews 10:24–25, we are called to assemble with other believers on a regular basis. There are also many passages that call believers to do things with and to "one another." By rejecting regular assembly, we are not able to keep these commands. A*

*connection to sitting under the authority of teaching elders could also be drawn from Hebrews 13:7.*

- 5. While among a group of friends and acquaintances, someone suggests that the whole group should go see a movie. You have heard that the movie contains violence and nudity and you say you don't think you want to go. Someone in the group asks, "What, are you one of those Jesus followers who can't go to movies?" What do you do?** *Jesus warned that anyone who rejects Him before man will be rejected before the Father (Matthew 10:32–33). We must be ready to name ourselves as Christians despite the cost. To partake in such a movie would be to engage in sin (Ephesians 4:17–5:15; Psalm 101:3–4). Jesus called His disciples to take up their crosses and be ready to follow Him at all costs—even to death (Matthew 16:24–26).*

? **If this activity was challenging for you, what does it tell you about your understanding of the Scriptures?** *Take care to encourage people to be more diligent in their study of Scripture rather than to discourage them for not knowing all of the answers. There may be immature believers in your class who just have not had time or encouragement to study in this way in the past.*

? **If you don't know what God has commanded, can you obey?** *It would certainly be harder to obey if you did not know what was expected of you. You might even avoid things that are not forbidden if you did not have an understanding of what God's Word says about that specific concept.*



## Applying God's Word

### WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

As we think about the principle of rewards for obedience, we see a clear example in the life of Joshua. As he studied and understood God's words, his life benefited from living in accord with God's principles and commands. But in order to know those commands, Joshua was

responsible for studying and putting those ideas into practice. As a result of his obedience, God caused Joshua's campaigns to take the Promised Land to prosper. We will see those results in the next lessons.

Although Joshua is an example of obedience for us, Jesus is a perfect example. In His use of Scripture to fight the temptation to sin, we find a pattern for our own lives. As we meditate on God's Word day and night, we will become equipped to respond to temptation with the very words of God. We will be conformed into the image of Christ as we study and obey. That is the ultimate reward from God and true prosperity.

## GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

- ? When Jesus was confronted with false Ideas, He went straight to Scripture as His authority. As we confront false ideas in our culture, is it more effective to use statistics and social science surveys or to use Scripture—“thus says science” or “thus says the Lord”? *Any time we resort to using surveys or popular opinion to back up ideas, we are basing our thinking on man's opinions, not God's sure words. If this is our strategy, someone will come up with a new survey that says the opposite or a new scientific study that is contrary to another study. Basing our arguments on the truths of God's Word is the only way we are guaranteed to start on a sure foundation. And, it is God's Word that has the power to change hearts and minds, not man's clever studies.*
- ? How did the Back It Up activity help you to see the importance of looking to God's Word to know how to obey God? *Discuss answers and the importance of knowing the truth so that error can be discerned.*
- ? What types of questions or temptations do you face that you don't know how to respond to in a biblical way? *Discuss various Ideas as time allows, pointing people to passages of Scripture that proclaim God's truth on the topic.*



### MEMORY VERSE

**Joshua 1:8–9** This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.



### GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Thank God for revealing His commands to us so that we know how to obey Him.
- Praise God for giving us examples to follow.
- Ask God for wisdom from His Word to fight against sin.