

#### Thursday, March 11, 2021—Joshua 1-3

“If it were easy, everyone would do it.” Countless advisors, coaches, and teachers have made this statement to those they are equipping and preparing. Something worthwhile will likely require above-average effort. Good things rarely come easily.

When Joshua became the leader of Israel, God called him to be strong and courageous. To be the people God called them to be and to experience the fullness of His promises, Israel needed to live according to God’s standards. They would need to abide by the Law (1:8-9). Wandering away would be easy. Missing His blessing would be easy. Living in fullness would require daily discipline and great courage. It would be worth it.

As Moses had done 40 years earlier, Joshua sent spies into the Promised Land. In Jericho, they found Rahab, a local woman who feared Yahweh. The stories of God’s power and provision preceded His people, and Jericho was terrified (2:9-11). Rahab protected the spies, and the spies arranged for her and her family to survive the deliverance of Jericho into His peoples’ hands. Her faith led to her salvation. Courage led to life.

As God had done 40 years earlier in parting the Red Sea, He parted the waters of the Jordan River as His people entered their new home (3:14-17). From slavery to wandering and wandering to rest, God was always leading the way, calling His people to courage and freedom. Thank God for the courageous life of Jesus and the courage and freedom His indwelling Spirit brings to those who walk in faith.

#### Wednesday, March 10, 2021—Deuteronomy 32-34

Songs work themselves into our memories and emotions in ways that simple words cannot. Songs take us back to special moments. Songs help us remember powerful truths. Songs rebuild what has slipped away.

As Moses was finishing his time of leadership and his walk on earth, he shared a song with God’s people that would be important for their new lives in the Promised Land. He recounted the power and provision of God. He acknowledged the sinful tendencies of His people. He called the people to trust in God alone and to forsake the idols around them. He wanted them to sing the truths God had been teaching them for 40 years.

Like Jacob blessed his sons near the end of Genesis, Moses spoke blessing over the 12 tribes of the great nation God had allowed him to lead (33:1-25). God’s intention was that there would be no other nation like this one (33:26), but they had to make God their refuge day after day. Their happiness depended on hiding behind Yahweh as their shield and refuge.

Moses remained faithful to his calling from God to the very end. He had no greater joy than to know the people were becoming who God wanted them to be. Ask God to stir in you renewed faithfulness to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and to live your life making disciples of Jesus who will also make disciples of Jesus. Teach them truths and songs that will guide them every day into faithfulness and abundance.

#### Tuesday, March 9, 2021—Deuteronomy 29-31

The old gospel song says it well, “God ain’t never had a grandchild. Only a child will do!” God desires personal relationship, so each person must come to Him in repentance and faith. No one can believe they have received the righteousness of Jesus because their parents are righteous.

God was fulfilling His covenant He had made with Abraham by working through a new generation of people. They were Abraham’s descendants, but the reason God was going to bless them was because they remained faithful to His call as individuals and as a generation. No one could think that he could enter the land, claim the blessing of God, and then live like a godless pagan (29:19). Each person had to be faithful.

God was making the covenant with those who were hearing His voice as well as with those who were not there that day (29:15). Succeeding generations would know this covenant to be true. Outsiders who saw the rebellious fall and suffer would know this covenant was true (29:24-28). When His people rebelled, they would be driven from the land and His blessing, but when they repented, He would surely bring them home (30:1-9). God is faithful to His word and to those who are faithful to Him.

God makes it clear. He offers a relationship of love and obedience that leads to true life (30:11-20). He offers strength and courage to do the hard things that show His greatness and goodness (31:1-8). Thank God for the gift of faith, salvation, and abundant life.

#### Monday, March 8, 2021—Deuteronomy 26-28

Good-natured jokes and real-life dilemmas involve the process of giving offerings at church. Pastors often dread preaching on the subject, and some members and visitors take offense when hearing about tithing during the worship service. Why is giving such a delicate subject?

God intended for tithes and offerings to be an opportunity for His people to reflect on where they had been without His provision and guidance. When they brought their tithes to the priest, they recounted their history and the way God brought them out of slavery and into abundance. Their tithes helped provided for the widow, the orphan, and the foreigner. Their offerings allowed them to worship God and help others (26:1-19).

Satan will gladly take something so good from God and corrupt it. What God intends to bring glory to Himself and flourishing for the community quickly becomes a burden or an imposition to the giver when Satan convinces him this offering could have gone to other things or that this offering belongs to the giver. Withholding the offering altogether or resenting to gift when giving it takes away the blessing.

The people had the choice between blessing and cursing, and they were to remind themselves of that when they entered the land (27:1-26, 28:15-68). If they chose to obey, God would set them above every other nation (28:1). The condition of their hearts would determine the health of their worship and the outcome of their lives.

Pray for a heart that rejoices in giving, obeying, and growing.

#### Sunday, March 7, 2021—Deuteronomy 23-25

When the time comes to plant, farmers put seed in the ground with the expectation that the seed will produce an abundance for harvest. When they plant corn,

they expect corn. When they plant tomatoes, they don't expect cucumbers. You harvest what you plant, not something else.

God placed lofty expectations of holiness on His people because He knew you reap what you sow. He put high standards on who could enter and not enter the congregation because He wanted the people to see His desires for them and become those kinds of people. He talked about what some would consider embarrassing ideas (23:1-25) so His people would know nothing was off limits. Everything matters to God. He sees all.

Community was vital for God's people to experience the holiness and abundance He wanted for them. Marriage was the building block for the family and community, so God gave parameters to keep marriage holy and in high regard. The community treated one another with honor when loaning or borrowing money, and they looked on strangers with respect because the entire nation had been strangers in the land of Egypt. The way they loved and respected one another was to be different than anyone else.

To see others as unworthy of respect or to live for personal gain at the expense of another was an abomination to God (25:16). He was not putting His name on a people who lived for themselves. The world had plenty of those people already. Pray to be different for the glory of God.

#### Saturday, March 6, 2021—Deuteronomy 20-22

When soldiers prepare for battle, their commanding officer will often stand before them. He will remind them of their training and their mission. He seeks to motivate them and propel them to victory.

When God's people approached a battle, the commanding officer was not the one who stood before them. The priest was their encourager (20:2). He would urge them to fight with purpose and certainty because God was with them. The one who stood between God and man now stood between Israel and the battlefield. They were not fighting for human achievement or land acquisition. They were on a mission to honor God.

God was sending His people into a land that would require their driving out the godless, but God was neither a warmonger nor bloodthirsty. He told Israel to offer peace first to those they encountered (20:10). When they settled in the land, they were to treat life as precious and to take seriously the loss of innocent life (21:1-9).

The people God was driving out were tainted by the consequences of their selfishness, pride, and idolatry. God was going to replace them with His own people, so He had high standards for the way they conducted themselves and valued others (22:1-30). If they lived for their own glory, they would quickly fall into the same sins as the Canaanites. If, however, they lived each day for the glory of Yahweh, the One who rescued them and provided for them, they would flourish like no other nation.

Praise God for Jesus' example and power to live abundantly.

#### Friday, March 5, 2021—Deuteronomy 17-19

Some children put on their finest performances for the public. While in a crowded restaurant or a busy aisle, these children express their selfish desires and their

contempt for their parents through tantrums and meltdowns. Most watching are appalled at their lack of respect.

Moses told the people of Israel to guard their hearts so their actions would not be contemptuous (17:13). Their worship and obedience were to come from hearts that honored God and wanted His glory above their own. Their personal lives and community were to be holy. The king they set above themselves was to set the example of humility and trust.

God was setting before them the call to be perfect (18:13). How was this possible? Why would God set such a high standard? The nations that inhabited the land feared the gods they worshiped, and they sacrificed to them hoping to please them. They never satisfied those idols, so they developed ways to please themselves in the process. Their worship ended up being self-worship.

Yahweh had chosen Israel. He loved them. They had to do nothing to earn His pleasure. Instead, He was calling them into communion with Him, enjoying His pleasure while having the highest regard for Him. They worshiped Him, the perfect One, and wanted to become more like Him every day. "Be perfect, for I am perfect." You become what you worship.

Love the Lord, and walk in His ways (19:9). Pray your life provides continual evidence of His goodness and your deep respect for Him.