

PRAYER: Begin with a few moments of sharing thanks and praises in prayer.

Leaders, it's your call; you may choose to incorporate more information/scriptures as time allows for your small group lesson. **Reflection:** Joshua stands out on the pages of the Old Testament as one of those rare biblical characters who exemplified walking in God's will throughout his entire lifetime. Not that he didn't make mistakes, but Joshua maintained persistent and consistent faithfulness to God throughout his life. In this lesson we hear Joshua's final words to Israel before he departed this life. Joshua was old, advanced in years...as he gathered Israel's leaders together to share with them the burden that lay on his heart. He had completed his earthly task. He had led Israel into the Promised Land. In seven exciting years, they had defeated the Canaanites sufficiently to eliminate any future military threat and resistance. Joshua had just completed dividing the land among the tribes as God instructed. Now he had some final words about Israel's recent experiences in Canaan.

Opener:

As a kid, who did you look up to as a hero?

What's the most difficult farewell you can remember?

Read: Joshua 23:1-8

Discuss:

How do you think Joshua felt as he looked back on his life? (tired, proud, filled with praise, some regrets, at peace, grateful, other?)

How did Joshua feel about his people's future? (hopeful, worried, optimistic, pessimistic?)

What did Joshua want to communicate to the next generation?

Read: Joshua 24:1-12

Discuss:

Why do you think Joshua recounts Israel's history?

Read: Joshua 24:13-15

Discuss:

After all they've been through, why were the Israelites given a choice now about whom to serve? (Joshua knew his earthly task was had been completed and wanted to renew the covenant for the next generation... they each needed to make a personal, deliberate, daily, and public choice to serve and follow the Lord.)

Read: Joshua 24:16-27

Discuss:

How did the people respond to Joshua's challenge?

When in your life did you make the choice to serve God?

Joshua used a stone to remind the people of their commitment. What reminds you of your decision to serve God?

Plan for Action:

What have you found helpful in being faithful to serve God? (having a daily quiet time, attending church regularly, being accountable to others, belonging to a Small Group or Sunday school class, other?)

Share one thing God has done for you or your family.

Joshua's first historical perspective reminded Israel that it was the Lord their God who brought them into the land and gave them victory after victory. It was because of their love for Him and their obedience to His laws that the Lord kept His promises to them. He had been faithful to them because of their faithfulness to Him.

This is a great example for every Christian. It is often easy to begin our Christian life giving glory to God. But as we grow older and as our own accomplishments increase, our natural tendency is to forget the source of our strength, our abilities, and our achievements. How easy to exalt and honor ourselves – even to start serving "other gods," particularly the "god of materialism" and the "god of intellectualism."

Like Joshua, we must realize that God uses our talents and our skills. Material and intellectual accomplishments are not wrong in themselves. It is not even wrong to use the word "I" to refer to our own efforts. But a Christian who puts God first in his life will always reflect with honesty and true humility that it is God who is responsible for all we are and have. The Christian who has a correct perspective on God's power and grace in his life can only agree with the apostle Paul who, sensing this very thing, wrote in great conviction Ephesians 3:20-21.

How can this group pray for you this week?

To view the complete teaching from the Sunday services go to www.centralcommunity.org/media

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