

*Use this format as a family, a couple, or with a small group.

Message Summary

God is faithful to His covenant: He promised his people a homeland and He is about to make good on that promise. As we explore this part of the story, we can see things from our 21st century-perspective that God's people there and then could not. For example, we know how it all turns out, but they had to live in great uncertainty—which is why they were repeatedly urged to “be courageous.” We can also understand these events in the bigger picture of the Bible's whole story, but those living it could not possibly be that objective. As Joshua led the Israelites into battle, they had to trust in God every step of the way: starting with their first steps across the Jordan River, which miraculously dried up for them. When they trusted God, battles went well; when they disobeyed, disaster followed. Although it was not always that simple, the principle of God's provision for His people even in their extreme circumstances was clear—as was His removal of favor when they rebelled. The faith lessons learned during the years of wandering were put to the test. By the end of the story, much of the land was won and settled. Joshua's final challenge to the people to deliberately choose which God they would serve powerfully echoes in our ears—and inspires us to live under God's uncontested leadership.

Opening Question

Did you go on trips when you were young? What do you remember about them?

Discussion Questions

Note: All page numbers below are from *The Story*, 2008 edition. Additional group discussion questions for this chapter can be found on page 392.

1. God gave Joshua very specific instructions (page 73 or Joshua 1:7-9) regarding keeping the “Book of the Law” before him (Genesis–Deuteronomy, as much of the Bible as he had). How would you put in your own words God's instructions to Joshua? What promises accompany God's command?
2. Knowing that God is by definition everywhere at all times, what did God mean when He told Joshua, “[I] will be with you wherever you go” (page 73 or Joshua 1:9)? In what ways have you felt God to be “with you” recently?
3. Joshua means, “God saves” or “God is Salvation” and is the same Hebrew name as Jesus. Make as many parallels as you can between the person and work of Joshua, the leader of Israel, and Jesus, the Messiah of Israel (and the world). Also note any important differences.
4. When Rahab described the mighty acts of God she concluded, “The Lord your God is God in heaven above and on earth below” (page 74 or Joshua 2:11). Given that culture's prevailing belief that gods were territorial and mostly personal (“my god versus your god”), what is the significance of Rahab's statement? What are some of the dangers and possible misunderstandings when we Christians use the phrase “my God” as we talk with unbelievers?
5. At the end of his life, Joshua reminded the Israelites, “not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed” (page 82 or Joshua 23:14-15). Fast-forward to the present day. How is your life different because of trusting in God's promises?
6. Also just before Joshua died, he challenged the people to “throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped” and to choose between the gods everybody around them served and the One True God. What “gods” (for example, skewed values, cherished prejudices, or misaligned priorities) from your family or the surrounding culture pull you away from wholehearted devotion to God? What would “throwing away” those idols look like for you?
7. Some people suggest faith is inactivity—in other words, the person who shows faith doesn't do anything because he or she trusts God to act. Other people believe faith involves taking huge risks. Divide your group into two teams. One team will take the position “Faith means wait,” and come up with as many arguments as they can to support it from events in this story (and other parts of the Bible). The other team will take the position that “Faith means go” and involves action, and will illustrate that view from events in this story (and other parts of the Bible). Give each team five minutes to make their case. Then give each team a few minutes for rebuttals. Finally, come back together as one group and make some concluding statements about faith you all agree on.

As a final question, you can ask group members who did the personal reflection assignment if there is anything from that material they would like to share or ask the group about. Close in prayer.