

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Joshua 23–24**PRINT PASSAGE:** Joshua 24:18-27

L5 Do Not Conform to the World

REFLECT



Since the merger of the two teams, Kamir had become buddies with Blake and Archie. They would hang out together at the movies, malls, parks, and parties. This was new to Kamir because he was typically a homebody. He likes to read, play video games, and watch movies at home with a few friends or by himself. Now he likes being out and about. It's making him quite popular.

One evening, the three boys were hanging out at Blake's house in the basement with two of Blake's other friends. They were watching an NBA game between the Golden State Warriors and the Atlanta Hawks. It was early in the game. The boys were excited. Suddenly, Blake pulled out a hundred-dollar bill and asked if they wanted to place bets on the game. One of the guys said, "Yeah, I was wondering what you were waiting on. Let's get busy. Here's my hundred for the Warriors." The other guys put up their money, too. They were waiting for Kamir to put his money on the table, saying, "Come on, man, it's a lot of fun. A little gambling never hurt anybody. Who knows . . . you might win." Kamir was very reluctant, but he felt pressured. He did not want the guys to think he was "different." So, he made the bet. Later, he felt really bad about it because he knew that gambling is wrong and the things to which it could lead. His Uncle Roy was addicted to gambling and lost everything he ever had: his marriage, family, house, car, and job.



Archie called Kamir the next day and told him that Blake was addicted and warned Kamir not to do it again because it may be fun in the beginning, but it can be addictive. "You can be in the crew, but you don't have to be part of what they do. You see I didn't put up. I had to stop. It's okay—they'll respect you for being true to yourself," Archie explained. Kamir was grateful for Archie's call and never gambled with the guys again.



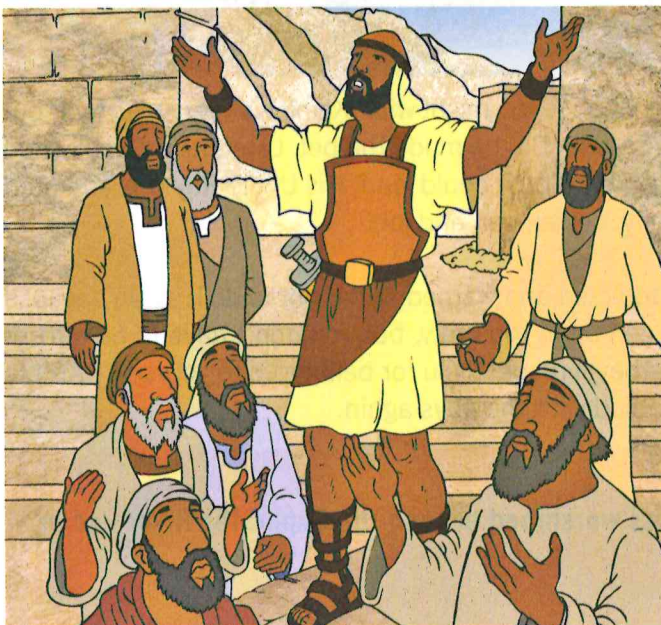
[Joshua said,] "Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD." (Joshua 24:14b)



INSPECT

Joshua 24:18-27

18 “And the LORD drove out before us all the nations, including the Amorites, who lived in the land. We too will serve the LORD, because he is our God.” **19** Joshua said to the people, “You are not able to serve the LORD. He is a holy God; he is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins. **20** If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after he has been good to you.” **21** But the people said to Joshua, “No! We will serve the LORD.” **22** Then Joshua said, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the LORD.” “Yes, we are witnesses,” they replied. **23** “Now then,” said Joshua, “throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel.” **24** And the people said to Joshua, “We will serve the LORD our God and obey him.” **25** On that day Joshua made a covenant for the people, and there at Shechem he reaffirmed for them decrees and laws. **26** And Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the Law of God. Then he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak near the holy place of the LORD. **27** “See!” he said to all the people. “This stone will be a witness against us. It has heard all the words the LORD has said to us. It will be a witness against you if you are untrue to your God.”

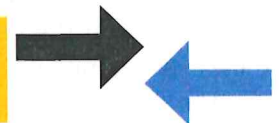


INTERSECT

THE ISRAELITES HAD CAPTURED CANAAN AND HAD BEEN INHABITANTS THERE FOR SOME TIME—LIVING IN PEACE. Joshua was getting old. He called all of the nations of Israel together, along with their elders, leaders, judges, and officials. Joshua started his speech with “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says.” It was important for Joshua to let the people know that it was not his own words he spoke. He is speaking to them on God’s behalf. Joshua was not a prophet, but here he spoke as an inspired messenger of God. Prophecy is not necessarily a prediction of the future; it can simply be a uniquely direct and spontaneous word from God.

During Joshua’s speech, he went back in time as far as Abraham, Issac, and Jacob. He brought them up to the current time. Joshua highlighted all of the things that the Lord had done for His chosen people. He had been good to Israel. Now they were “living large” in this magnificent, fruitful land that they did not build; God gave it to them. They were tempted to forget God and worship idols. Joshua’s speech to them was to throw away their foreign idols and to serve the one and only God of Israel, and to worship only the God they had witnessed do great things. The people said to Joshua, “We will only serve the Lord.” He made a covenant with Israel and reaffirmed the Lord’s decrees and laws. Joshua died at the old age of 110 years old.

Inside Out



Joshua was an old man when he delivered this speech to Israel. He was the leader of this great nation. He probably knew or felt that his time on the earth was about to end. Read chapter 24 and point to Scriptures that may serve as a dying man’s urging or warning to his followers. Before Joshua left this earth, he wanted the Israelites to continue to serve God, and he witnessed them confess that they would. This is great leadership.

Great leaders leave a lasting impression on their people and others. They are admired because of how they live their lives. Just imagine how much this final speech impacted the Israelites.



THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT!

How does this passage relate to youth today? There are so many vices in the world that tempt youth. Physical vices like cigarettes, drugs, alcohol, gambling, and fornication are a few. Then there is the quest for power, authority, and wealth.

Joshua reminds us that we have to live “in” this world that is made up of diverse people and personalities. But we do not have to live “of” the world and get caught up in doing things that do not please God. We must put our faith in the only one and true God. He will protect us while we live in uncertain times in this world.



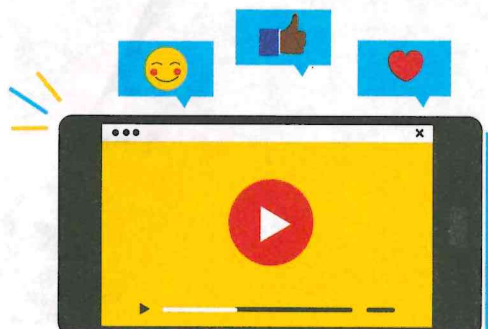
STEPPING OUT!

- Explore current magazines and advertisements. What idols do we worship as a society? Why do we worship these idols? How can we “throw them away” and worship only the Lord?
- Create a list of all the things you WANT right now. Be honest. What do you notice?
- List some of the things (*that please God*) that you wish you had included in the list above.



CONNECT

We must make our message clear, like Joshua did to the Israelites. Choose whom you will serve but suffer the consequences of not choosing God. Then he said, “But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” Whom will you choose? Make the choice to serve the one and almighty powerful God. Read again how He delivered and protected the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan. He will do the same for you if you believe and trust Him. Be strong and courageous in your faith.



MEDIA MISSION

Find a poem or a song that demonstrates the faith that Joshua had in God. God is faithful to do just what He said He would do. He brought Israel to the Promised Land. We should be grateful for His faithfulness. Listen to the great hymn “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” (sung by Carrie Underwood) and meditate on the words.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NT0HcAr9ael>

Walking the Walk

By Karen Hayes Harris

When we think of Joshua, we can describe him as having strong faith and showing obedience to God. Joshua was Moses' successor; God called him to take over Moses' leadership once Moses was gone. Joshua felt ready for the task because of the time he had spent with his mentor, Moses. God verbally commissioned Joshua to take Moses' place; Joshua received God's anointing and God's righteous call and covering. Joshua had courage because he knew that God was with him. He was obedient to God's will, and he had

faith in God's promises. Regardless of how difficult circumstances and situations became, Joshua believed in God. Joshua remained steadfast and immovable. He knew that his purpose was to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land, and he was determined to fulfill the purpose that God had called him to fulfill. Joshua saw the need for a new beginning for his generation. God wanted to bring the people into a place that He called heaven on Earth.

Like Joshua, we are called to be **promise claimers**. God makes promises, but we are called to obey God to secure them. We each were created to walk in the fullness of Christ, not in partial victory. In Acts 13:36, it was said that David fulfilled the purpose of God in his generation. Don't you want it said of you that you are living God's plan and purpose for your life, not by your own feelings or cultural opinion? God has a specific purpose for each of us. We each are called to pursue God's promises, while our feet still walk on this broken ground. We have specific tasks and responsibilities that God has chosen us to fulfill. We must learn to hear from God and seek to fulfill that purpose.

The purpose of our lives is far greater than our own personal thoughts and ideas. If we want to know why we were created, we must begin with God. We were born by His purpose and for His purpose. God has created each of us with a specific purpose and a plan. We each have a specific role and life to live. He provided each of us with special gifts and talents to accomplish His will for our lives on the earth. It is important to remain grounded and to stay focused on the will of Jesus so that we do not get caught up in what the world has to offer. We must remain intentional about what we are called to do through Jesus Christ.

To remember and apply God's Word, we must study it, pray unceasingly, and seek God's truth—which helps us become disciplined and dedicated as we stretch beyond our comfort zones. Many times, as with Joshua, we may be called to step out on faith in the name of Jesus and to take risks on this faith journey. When we are obedient in the little things, we will reap the bigger rewards. We must be willing to humble ourselves and pray—seeking His face—understanding that God will equip the called and that only God gives promotion. We become examples of living the Gospel of Jesus Christ in conversation, in spirit, in faith, and in our walk.

Periodically, we need to be still and listen to the Holy Spirit within and ask ourselves whether we are wavering or walking with Jesus. We may need to adjust our commitments and become more diligent and aligned with what the Lord is calling us to do.

The only thing that can stop God's plan for our lives is us. God, through His free will, graciously allows us the freedom to choose whether or not to pursue His purpose for our lives. There may be times when we are hesitant to seek God's plan for our lives. Perhaps we have feelings of doubt, fear, uncertainty, or unbelief, or an unawareness that God even has a plan for our lives. God is not just the starting point of our lives; He is the source of our lives. It is in Christ that we discover our identity and the purpose for which we live (see Ephesians 1:11). The Bible says that the Lord will fulfill His purpose for us (see Psalm 138:8). God's Word is true and will not return void.

We are called to faith that overcomes fear. Second Timothy 1:7 reads, "The Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline." Fears will tell us that we cannot make it. Fears are today's lies about tomorrow's promise. Fears are denials of hope and are rooted in doubts about God's power, presence, and promise. We serve an omnipotent God (all-powerful), an omniscient God (all-knowing), and an omnipresent God (He is everywhere). God always offers us the guarantee of His presence, and that is enough to cast fears aside. We need to walk in the Spirit versus the flesh. We need to press in for the kind of faith that overrules self. We must focus our goals on serving others, not on our convenience. We often wonder, "What's in it for me?" However, we should focus our goals on serving others. We must give our lives away, because to save them, we will inevitably lose them. To find our life is to lay it down—first at the feet of Jesus and then in the face of any challenges we may have in our own lives (see Matthew 16:25). Our calling is to a higher level to serve others in the wisdom of the Lord. We must not give up.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. (Hebrews 12:1-2a)

The One who calls us has already won. If we keep our eyes on Him, then even if we stumble, He will carry us on.