

## *Promised Land 1 Study and Discussion Questions*

### *Lesson One: Preparation for Conquest - Joshua 1:1 – 5:12*

*Unless otherwise noted, all questions in this lesson and subsequent lessons refer to the underlined Scripture references listed at the beginning of each of the five sections within the lesson (often given as readings).*

#### From Joshua 1:1-11:

- 1) Read Genesis 12:1-7 and 15:13-21. What promises had God given Abraham, the Patriarch of the nation of Israel? In Genesis 12, God promised Abraham numerous descendants, blessing, and land. In Genesis 15, God promised that, after four hundred years of enslavement in a foreign land, He would deliver Abraham's descendants, punish their oppressors, and bring them out with many possessions. In the fourth generation, Abraham's descendants would return and possess the land of the Canaanites.
- 2) Read Joshua 1:1-6 with Genesis 46:2-4, Exodus 1:1-7, 12:40-41, and Numbers 32:13. From these passages and what you discovered in question 1, give a short history of the Israelites (Abraham's descendants) ending with the Joshua 1 passage (Abraham's grandson Jacob is also known as "Israel"). After God promised Abraham numerous descendants, blessing and land, He directed Abraham's grandson Jacob (also known as Israel) to take his family to Egypt, where God promised to grow his family into a great nation. God also promised He would bring them back out of Egypt to Canaan. According to Exodus 1, Jacob's twelve sons went to Egypt and became exceedingly numerous. According to Exodus 12, after 430 years, the Israelites left Egypt. According to Numbers 32, the generation of Israelites that left Egypt spent 40 years wandering in the desert until they died. Joshua 1 says that following the death of Moses, God appointed Joshua to lead the children of those Israelites who died in the desert in overtaking and possessing Canaan, the Promised Land.
- 3) What challenges and promises did God give Joshua (Joshua 1:1-11), and how can you apply one or more of them to your own circumstances today? Challenges: "Get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them" (1:2); "Be strong and very courageous...do not be terrified or discouraged" (1:6, 7, 9); "Be careful to obey the law so you may be successful... meditate on it day and night" (1:7, 8). Promises: "I will give you every place where you set your foot" (1:3); "No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life" (1:5); "As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you... The Lord your God will be with you wherever you go" (1:5, 9). Personal sharing regarding challenges and promises

#### From Joshua 1:12 – 2:24:

- 4) Read Joshua 1:2, 12-18 with Numbers 32:1-2, 5, 16-22 and record the basic facts about the land inheritance of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half of the tribe of Manasseh. How does Joshua 1 say these tribes responded to his reminder of their obligation? Two-and-a-half of the twelve tribes had asked Moses to allow them to inherit the land east of the Jordan, formerly belonging to the Amorite kings, Sihon and Og. They believed the land was spacious enough for their vast flocks and herds. Moses' agreement was contingent upon their willingness to assist the other nine-and-a-half tribes in conquering Canaan (west of the Jordan). According to the agreement, they could not return to their land inheritance until all of the tribes received their inheritance. While those men of fighting age were engaged, the families and flocks of the two-and-a-half tribes could remain east of the Jordan. In Joshua 1:12-18, the eastern tribes affirmed their intentions to keep the promise they had made to Moses and fully submit to Joshua's leadership.

- 5) How did Rahab explain her reason for helping the two Israelite spies (include verse numbers with your answers)? What do Rahab's words and actions cause you to conclude about her faith? In 2:9-11, Rahab said, "I know that the LORD has given this land to you and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. We have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to Sihon and Og, the two kings of the Amorites east of the Jordan, whom you completely destroyed. When we heard of it, our hearts melted and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the LORD your God is God in heaven above and on the earth below." Rahab had come to believe that the God of the Israelites was the same God who made heaven and earth. She chose to assist the Israelites, believing their God intended to overthrow her own city-state and give it to them. She hoped that the Israelites would accept her as one of their own and spare her life and the lives of her family members. By aligning herself with the Israelites, Rahab chose to honor the Israelites *and the God of the Israelites* over her own people and the gods of her own people.
- 6) According to Joshua 2:1, what was Rahab's occupation? With this in mind, glance at Matthew 1:1, 5 and tell how Rahab has been honored. What does this tell you about the God of the Bible (see 1 Corinthians 1:26-31)? Rahab was a female (in a patriarchal society), a Gentile (despised by Jews), and a prostitute, yet she was privileged to be in the ancestral line of Jesus Christ! The God of the Bible does not show favoritism. He used the descendants of Abraham as His instruments of blessing to the world (through them, Jesus Christ descended and the Holy Scriptures have been handed down), but God has always intended to include the Gentiles in His plan of salvation (Galatians 3:8). 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 says that God intentionally chooses to work through unlikely people in order that He might be glorified.
- 7) For whom will you commit to pray this week that, like Rahab, they might shift their allegiance to the Lord, God of heaven and earth? **Personal sharing**

From Joshua 3 and 4:

- 8) Skim Exodus 25:1-22, Numbers 10:33-36, and Deuteronomy 10:8 and record what you learn about the Ark of the Covenant. The Israelites donated specific items that Moses used to build a portable sanctuary (God's dwelling), according to the pattern shown him on the mountain. One of the Tabernacle's furnishings (the Ark of the Covenant) was a chest, overlaid with gold and with rings built into both ends (enabling it to be carried on poles). The lid (the "atonement cover") had two cherubim, facing one another, mounted atop. The Ark of the Covenant contained the "Testimony" (the stone tablets with the covenant law written on them), Aaron's budding rod (Numbers 17:1-11), and a manna-filled urn (Exodus 16:33-34). Symbolically, God dwelt between the wings of the two cherubim, and there, Moses met with Him. Throughout the forty-year journey from Sinai to the Promised Land, The Levites (the priestly tribe) carried the Ark. Wherever the Israelites went, the Ark went before them, leading the way (Numbers 10:33-36).
- 9) Based on what you learned in question 8, why would Joshua have sent out instructions to follow the Ark (Joshua 3:2-4) and why would he also have wanted the Israelites to also keep their distance? For students who are familiar with New Testament teachings, explain how a person today can "draw near" to God's presence today (refer to Hebrews 10:19-22). Wherever the Israelites went during their 40 years of wilderness wandering, the Ark, the place of God's symbolic dwelling, always led the way. The Israelites were told to follow the Ark because following it meant following God (Joshua 3). He would lead them safely into places that were unfamiliar to them (verse 4). However, in reverence to the Lord their King, they were also to keep their distance. Their sin was a barrier that kept them from safely approaching God's holy presence. As a reminder, the Law of Moses (also Joshua 3:4) instructed Old Testament believers to keep a physical distance between their bodies and the things of God. Nevertheless, in every era, people have experienced intimacy with God by faith. Jesus' shed blood paved the way for open access to God's presence (Hebrews 10:19). Previously, access to God was indirect (through the intervention of sacrifices and a priest). Those whose sins have been forgiven are legally justified before God through faith in Jesus and can directly approach ("draw near to") Him.
- 10) Is there some "territory" that you can trust God to lead you through at this time in your life, since "you have never been this way before" (Joshua 3:4)? If so, what is it? **Personal sharing**

From Joshua 3 and 4:

- 11) List all the reasons why God miraculously stopped the flow of the Jordan River during its flood stage to allow the Israelites to cross on dry land? *The miracle was a physical provision to make possible the crossing of a river in flood stage by an entire nation of people. Indeed, this was a generation that had grown up in the desert, a good distance from any place where they could have learned to swim! Additionally, the Lord performed this miracle to give the Israelites confidence in Joshua, their newly appointed leader (3:7; 4:14), to know the living God was among them and would drive out the inhabitants of Canaan (3:10), to remind *their descendants* of His power in bringing them into the Land of Promise (4:6-7, 21-23), “that the *people of the earth* [my emphasis] might know that the hand of the Lord is powerful,” and “that you might always fear the Lord your God” (4:23-24).*
- 12) Refer to Joshua 4:6 and 21. What has God done in your life recently that you ought to share with someone, in order that they might consider or delight in His awesome deeds? It does not need to be as dramatic as the crossing of the Jordan on dry ground! *Personal sharing*

From Joshua 5:1-12:

- 13) What two events occurred at Gilgal after the Israelites had crossed into the Promised Land but before they began to conquer it? *All the Israelite men of this younger generation were circumcised and the Passover was celebrated.*
- 14) From Joshua 1:1-5:12, list all the events that should have prepared the Israelites for the conquest of the Promised Land. Explain your reasoning. *In chapter 1, the agreement of the eastern tribes to keep their commitment to cross the Jordan, fight with the others, and obey Joshua enabled the Israelites to be united in their effort. It also brought encouragement to the other ten-and-a-half tribes. The Israelites would have also been encouraged to know the Canaanites were already demoralized and terrorized by God’s acts on Israel’s behalf (information the spies received from Rahab [chapter 2]). In chapter 3, the miraculous crossing of the Jordan River was a reminder of God’s power and assured Israel of His intention of giving them the land (if God could get an entire nation of people across a major river at flood stage on dry ground, couldn’t He also give them the land?) In 4:14, the exaltation of Joshua as God’s chosen leader left the Israelites in awe of Joshua and gave them great confidence in his leadership. In chapter 5, the observances of circumcision (a symbol of cutting off one’s own strength and relying on God) and the Passover, at God’s command, prepared Israel spiritually for conquest, for obedience precedes success (Joshua 1:8). The Passover was also a specific reminder of God’s mighty acts on their behalf in their past.*
- 15) Reread Joshua 1:8. How do reading, meditating on, and obeying God’s word prepare you for spiritual victory? Can you think of a way that it can help you gain victory this week? *Joshua 1:8 commends study and meditation on God’s word as essential to spiritual victory (prosperity and success). A person must be familiar with God’s word in order to fully obey it. We must always have it in the forefronts of our minds, because obedience is foreign to our sin nature. The truth in God’s word renews our minds so we can discover God’s will for us (Romans 12:2). Personal sharing*