

LARGER THAN LIFE

"LIVING LIFE LARGE"

This Week's Core Competency

Biblical Community - I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world. Acts 2:44-47 *All the believers were together and had everything in common. 45Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. 46Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, 47praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

Contemporary evangelical Christianity makes much of the individual but not so much of the community. Many Christians appear to view their faith as an exclusively individual affair, their belief in Jesus as thoroughly personal matter, something between them and God that has no implications for others who also believe and vice versa. They see themselves and other Christians like people on their way to a movie with nothing more in common than a ticket to the theatre. They probably go to church, at least from time to time, and may even be members of a particular church, but that's as far as it goes. Somehow attending church doesn't translate into any sense of a meaningful bond or connection to others who attend. As far as these Christians are concerned, people who attend church are no more than individuals in a sanctuary at the same time for an hour each week. But during the week, outside of the church service, it's every man for himself. In their view, what others do during the week is their own business and what happens to them is their own concern. Their individualistic view of faith is a view dictated more by the world than the word.

Contemporary evangelical Christianity needs to make more of the community. According to the word, believers have more in common than a ticket to heaven. Being Christians means we're family. We're God's people. Not only that, being Christians means we're members of the same body of Christ, the church. It means we have the same head, Christ. We're God's household, God's building. Being Christians means we're in this life together and have a stake in each others' lives. We are one in Christ.

A Difficult Situation

To be perfectly honest I'm tired of being told to "get connected." Practically every time I attend church I'm encouraged to join a community group or home group. I feel like standing up right in the middle of the service and saying, "I'm fine. I don't need to get connected. Jesus is enough for me." Hey, I'm saved. I love my church. I attend regularly. Why isn't that enough? Quit nagging me. Besides, I don't need all the headaches that I think getting connected involves. Live and let live that's my motto. If I get connected I'm going to know more about other people who attend this church than I want to know and they're going to know more about me than I want them to know. And that's not good. What's more, if I get connected someone is going to ask me to volunteer for something and my life is busy enough right now. I have plenty to do; I don't need to volunteer. As far as I can tell getting connected is a one way street that demands more than it offers. I don't need to get connected; I have plenty of friends. I even have friends at church.

step 1

LOOK CLOSELY – observe what you are reading.

Joshua 1:1-18

1 After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide: 2 "Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites. 3 I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. 4 Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates—all the Hittite country—to the Great Sea on the west. 5 No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.

6 "Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. 7 Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. 8 Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."

10 So Joshua ordered the officers of the people: 11 "Go through the camp and tell the people, 'Get your supplies ready. Three days from now you will cross the Jordan here to go in and take possession of the land the LORD your God is giving you for your own.' "

12 But to the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joshua said, 13 "Remember the command that Moses the servant of the LORD gave you: 'The LORD your God is giving you rest and has granted you this land.' 14 Your wives, your children and your livestock may stay in the land that Moses gave you east of the Jordan, but all your fighting men, fully armed, must cross over ahead of your brothers. You are to help your brothers 15 until the LORD gives them rest, as he has done for you, and until they too have taken possession of the land that the LORD your God is giving them. After that, you may go back and occupy your own land, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you east of the Jordan toward the sunrise."

16 Then they answered Joshua, "Whatever you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. 17 Just as we fully obeyed Moses, so we will obey you. Only may the LORD your God be with you as he was with Moses. 18 Whoever rebels against your word and does not obey your words, whatever you may command them, will be put to death. Only be strong and courageous!"

• Pick a verse to meditate on this week.

• Reading to see the details

- * Draw an arrow from "Moses" to "servant of the LORD" in v. 1.
- * Draw an arrow from "Joshua" to "Moses aide" in v. 1.
- * Bracket the phrase "as I promised Moses" in v. 3 and "I swore to their forefathers" in v. 6.
- * Box the word "you" in vv. 5-9.
- * Highlight the command "'Be strong and courageous" in vv. 6, 7, 9, 18.
- * Circle the words "successful" and "prosperous" in vv. 7, 8.
- * Circle the word "meditate" in v. 8.
- * Bracket the expression "day and night" in v. 8.
- * Underline the rhetorical question in v. 9.
- * Next to v. 13 write, "See Dt 3:18-20; cf. Nu 32."
- * Box the words "just as" followed by "so" in v. 17 indicating *comparison*.

- **Recognizing the message of the passage**

Joshua 1 introduces the story of the conquest and allocation of the land to the Israelites. At the same time, it makes it clear that this is not a new story but a new chapter in an ongoing story that began when God first promised to give Canaan to Abraham's offspring (Ge 12:7). Better yet, it's a new chapter in an ongoing story that began in the Garden long before Abraham when God told the serpent, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel" (Ge 3:15). It's a new chapter in the story of redemption, the *upper story*. Now, nearly 700 years after he had first promised it, God is ready to give the land to Abraham's offspring.

The story of the conquest and allocation of the land is also story about Joshua and the Israelites, the *lower story*. Moses is dead and Joshua, his aide, must lead the people in his place, but is he ready to fill such big shoes? On one hand scripture doesn't refer to him as "the servant of the LORD." It reserves that title for Moses for the time being. On the other hand, there is good reason to be optimistic. The Lord promised to be with Joshua as he was with Moses. "As I was with Moses, so I will be with you," he says. "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Nevertheless, Joshua's success isn't guaranteed. It's contingent on him being strong and courageous; it's contingent on him obeying the law given to him by his mentor, Moses. And what must he do to ensure that he does everything written in the law? He must "meditate on it day and night." The same goes for us today. If we want to obey God, we have to saturate our minds with his word. Time will tell as the story unfolds whether Joshua will be prosperous and successful or not.

The *lower story* is about the Israelites too. The Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh had already taken possession of their land. They had already settled down on the east side of the Jordan River and had nothing more to gain by joining in the fray with the other tribes to wrest the rest of the land from the grip of its inhabitants. But Joshua made it clear that they had no choice in the matter. God may have given them rest but they were obligated to help their brothers until he would give them rest too. This was no land rush, no westward ho, every man for himself land grab. God had promised the land to Abraham's descendants; it was theirs to inherit. They were in this *together*. Again success isn't guaranteed. It's contingent on the two and a half tribes obeying the command Moses gave them (see Dt 3:18-20) when they settled down in Transjordan and on them keeping the promise they made him at that time (Nu 32:25-27). To Moses they said, "We your servants will do as our lord commands. Our children and wives, our flocks and herds will remain here in the cities of Gilead. But your servants, every man armed for battle, will cross over to fight before the LORD, just as our lord says." Time will tell as the story unfolds whether the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh will keep their word and along with Joshua be prosperous and successful or not.

The Message of this Passage

When it comes to enjoying all that God has for us, his church, we need to maintain the unity of the body in pursuit of perfect obedience to his word.

- **Digging deeper into its meaning**

v. 1 *after the death* The book of Joshua is clearly picks up and continues the story of the Israelites where the book of Deuteronomy left off (see Dt 34). "Joshua was designated as Moses' successor in Num. 27:15-23 and in Deut. 3:21-22; 31:1-8. He was the one to complete Moses' unfinished mission and lead Israel into the promised land. Thus the continuity of leadership is assured" (Marten H. Woudstra, *The Book of Joshua*, NICOT, 56).

v. 1 *servant of the LORD* This special title is used fourteen times with reference to Moses, Israel's leader *par excellence*, and only twice of Joshua (Jos 24:29; Jdg 2:8) and twice of David (Ps 18:1; 36:1).

v. 1 *LORD* In the preface to the NIV the translators write, "In regard to the divine name YHWH, commonly referred to as the *Tetragrammaton*, the translators adopted the devise used in most English versions of rendering that name as LORD in capital letters to distinguish it from *Adonai*, another Hebrew word rendered 'Lord,' for which small letters are used." Most scholars agree that this name was pronounced "Yahweh." "This is the most

holy, personal name of God, revealing much of his character, and it is praised repeatedly throughout the Psalms. It is the name whose meaning was revealed to Moses at the burning bush (Exod 3:11-15; cf. 6:2-3), and it tells us about God's eternal existence and his enduring faithfulness to his people. 'Yahweh' was God's personal name just as 'Baal' and 'Marduk' were the personal names of the high gods of the Canaanites and the Babylonians, respectively" (David M. Howard Jr., *Joshua*, NAC, 72, 73).

v. 1 **Joshua** The name means "Yahweh saves/delivers." "His original name was 'Hoshea,' which means 'salvation' or 'deliverance' (Num13:8 and Deut 32:44). Numbers 13:16 explains that Moses himself gave Hoshea his new name 'Joshua'" (73).

v. 2 **about to give** In verse 2 giving the land is future, but in verse 3 it is past (lit., "Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses," NASB). "In one sense God was still in process of giving Israel the land. But in another sense God had already given Israel the land. It is as though Israel already possessed legal title to the land (ever since Abraham's day), but they were awaiting God's timing for the actual possession" (76).

v. 3 **as** The promise of the land first made to Abraham (see Ge 12:7; 13:14-18; 15:18) then confirmed to Isaac (see Ge 26:1-6) and to Jacob (see Ge 28:13-15) was confirmed to Moses in Deuteronomy 34:1-4. Seven centuries passed from the time the promise of the land was given until the time of Joshua.

v. 4 **desert** The general boundaries of the land include a desert in the south and Lebanon in the north, the Jordan in the east and the Mediterranean in the west. "The Euphrates River is often designated as 'the great river' when it is mentioned in the Bible (as here). In reality, the Euphrates represents the northeastern border; the Jordan River or the Arabian desert is the true eastern border. However, in biblical geography, the Euphrates represents a convenient eastern border. The 'Great Sea on the west' is the Mediterranean Sea" (82).

v. 4 **Hittite** This term is used to refer to different peoples. Here it's probably used as a synonym for "Canaanites," the people occupying the land.

v. 5 **you** The singular "you" refers to Joshua in vv 5-9.

v. 6 **strong, courageous** The two words have similar meanings. The second may have the connotation "resoluteness" in verse 9 following the commands to keep the law, which call for "resoluteness" rather than "courage" (84).

v. 8 **meditate** The word implies something that is done aloud. The idea is that one reads or recites the law aloud quietly to oneself suggesting a barely audible murmur.

v. 8 **prosperous** "The two words we find here in our passage in Joshua (1:7-8) speaking of prosperity and success are almost never used in the Old Testament to speak of financial success. Rather, they speak of succeeding in life's proper endeavors. This happens when people's lives are focused entirely on God and obedience to him. The focus of people's endeavors is not to be prosperity and success but rather holiness and obedience" (88).

v. 10 **officers** Probably administrative officials rather than military officers. "Previously, God had appointed them to help Moses in his administrative duties. They were respected leaders in Israel, who had the Spirit of the Lord on them (Num 11:16-17; Deut 1:15-16), and who had some judicial and/or religious (Levitical) duties (Deut 1:15-16; 16:18; 2Chr 19:11; 34:13)" (90).

v. 14 **brothers** Two and one half tribes were permitted to settle on the east side of the Jordan provided they would join in the conquest of the land (see Dt 3:18-20). "These Transjordan tribes were required to keep covenant solidarity with their brethren settling west of the Jordan (Cisjordan) by helping them in the conquest" (92).

• Answering Interpretive Questions

1. How can you tell that the book of Joshua picks up where the book of Deuteronomy leaves off?

2. What does this opening paragraph indicate about God's connection to Israel and the land?

3. Complete this sentence. "Joshua's success was contingent upon . . ."

4. Explain what prosperity and success means in this context.

5. What can one do to increase the likelihood that he or she will be obedient to God?

6. What's the point of the rhetorical question in verse 9?

7. The command "Be strong and courageous" is given four times in this passage. What has being strong and courageous got to do with anything?

8. Verse 13 and verse 15 both mention "rest." To what does the word refer?

9. Why did fighting men from the two and a half tribes have to enter the fray for land that would not be theirs?

10. What do you think of the people's response to Joshua in the last paragraph?

step **3** **RESPOND WISELY** – apply what you have read.

11. What does this week's passage have to do with the Core Practice Biblical Community?

12. How would you respond to the difficult situation described on the front page in light of the Core Practice Biblical Community and the message of this week's passage?

- **Table Discussion.**

13. Do you think the command "Be strong and courageous" applies to us today?

- **Journal how God spoke to you through this passage.**

You don't need a leather bound gilded journal; a simple spiral notebook will do. Date your entry and note the Scripture reference. Then simply record how God spoke to you as you read the passage.

- **Suggestions for Home Groups**

This would be a good week to focus on Compassion, one of the 7 Functions of biblical community. Break into groups of two or three and memorize the creed and verses for this week's Core Competency. Do you think brand of Christianity found in the west is too individualistic? Discuss.

step 4 Connect the **FAMILY**.

Experience it!

Experience scripture through the activity-based learning exercise. Dinner is a perfect time to engage the family.

Write ten specific instructions that each member must follow for setting the table (i.e. take one fork and pass the rest to the right). Explain the family will have to follow your instructions to be able to enjoy dinner. Secretly pick a member that will not follow the directions completely (i.e., take two forks). Upon experiencing family chaos and the delay of enjoying dinner, read Joshua 1:1-9. When everyone follows God's directions fully, the entire group (and family) experiences His blessings!



Pray it!

Pray God's will for your child by praying scriptures. Insert your child's name in the blanks as you pray.

Father, I pray _____ will have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and how long and high and deep is the love of Christ. Ephesians 3:18 (NIV)

Post it!

Post the kid-friendly Core Competency and the memory verse throughout the house. Lead your children to interact with them as they memorize.

Biblical Community – I hang out with other Christians to help with God's work in all of our lives.

Memory Verse– "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve. . . . But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." Joshua 24:15

Discuss it!

Discover biblical truth by discussing the scripture. Reflective questions are great with older kids.

Who was Joshua leading across the Jordan River?

What does it mean to "meditate on the Word day and night?"

Why is the Bible referred to as the "Book of Instruction?"

Why was it important for all the people to do everything Joshua was saying?

Live it!

Live out the Core Competency and build deeper relationships by doing this activity.

Invite another family from your Home Group to join your family in making cookies. Divide the ingredients needed among the kids and make them responsible for bringing them. As everyone participates in the preparation enjoy the adventure of working together. Deliver the cookies to an individual needing encouragement. Discuss how important biblical community really is.



Challenge

Kids preschool through sixth grade receive Kid Pix Tokens for each discipleship activity completed.

Family completes **Experience It** _____ Child memorizes kid-friendly **Core Competency** _____

Family participates in **Live It** _____ Child memorizes **Memory Verse** _____ (Jer 29:12)

Kids can earn extra tokens on Sunday morning by:

Bringing a friend to **The Kid Connection** _____ Completing **KIDZ Bulletin** _____

Child's name _____ Parent's signature _____

30 CORE COMPETENCIES

10 CORE BELIEFS

Trinity *2 Corinthians 13:14*

I believe the God of the Bible is the only true God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Salvation By Grace *Ephesians 2:8-9*

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.

Authority of the Bible *2 Timothy 3:16-17*

I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Personal God *Psalms 121:1-2*

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Identity in Christ *John 1:12*

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Church *Ephesians 4:15-16*

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Humanity *John 3:16*

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Compassion *Psalms 82:3-4*

I believe God calls all Christians to show compassion to those in need.

Eternity *John 14:1-4*

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

Stewardship *1 Timothy 6:17-19*

I believe that everything I am or own belongs to God.

10 CORE PRACTICES

Worship *Psalms 95:1-7*

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

Prayer *Psalms 66:16-20*

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Bible Study *Hebrews 4:12*

I read the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-mindedness *Matthew 6:33*

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts *Romans 12:4-6*

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Biblical Community *Acts 2:44-47*

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Giving Away My Time *Colossians 3:17*

I give away my time to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Money

2 Corinthians 8:7

I give away my money to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Faith *Ephesians*

6:19-20

I give away my faith to fulfill God's purposes.

Giving Away My Life *Romans 12:1*

I give away my life to fulfill God's purposes.

10 CORE VIRTUES

Joy *John 15:11*

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace *Philippians 4:6-7*

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself, and others.

Faithfulness *Proverbs 3:3-4*

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Self-Control *Titus 2:11-13*

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Humility *Philippians 2:3, 4*

I choose to esteem others above myself.

Love *1 John 4:10-12*

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Patience *Proverbs 14:29*

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness *1 Thess. 5:15*

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others.

Gentleness *Philippians 4:5*

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Hope *Hebrews 6:19-20*

I can cope with the hardships of life and with death because of the hope I have in Jesus Christ.

About the Authors

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The mission of THE SCROLLS is to help you develop the beliefs, practices, and virtues of a follower of Jesus Christ called The 30 Core Competencies through your own active reading of the Bible. Send any questions or comments you may have about this lesson to Tom Bulick. His e-mail address is tbulick@pantego.org.