

## HOW TO STAY THE COURSE

Joshua 24, Internet Joshua24'01 FAREWELL 2 ser.wpd, September 24, 2002

**(Josh 24)**, “And Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God. {2} And Joshua said unto all the people, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods. {3} And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac. {4} And I gave unto Isaac Jacob and Esau: and I gave unto Esau mount Seir, to possess it; but Jacob and his children went down into Egypt. {5} I sent Moses also and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt, according to that which I did among them: and afterward I brought you out. {6} And I brought your fathers out of Egypt: and ye came unto the sea; and the Egyptians pursued after your fathers with chariots and horsemen unto the Red sea. {7} And when they cried unto the LORD, he put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and brought the sea upon them, and covered them; and your eyes have seen what I have done in Egypt: and ye dwelt in the wilderness a long season. {8} And I brought you into the land of the Amorites, which dwelt on the other side Jordan; and they fought with you: and I gave them into your hand, that ye might possess their land; and I destroyed them from before you. {9} Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and warred against Israel, and sent and called Balaam the son of Beor to curse you: {10} But I would not hearken unto Balaam; therefore he blessed you still: so I delivered you out of his hand. {11} And ye went over Jordan, and came unto Jericho: and the men of Jericho fought against you, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, and the Hittites, and the Girgashites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; and I delivered them into your hand. {12} And I sent the hornet before you, which drave them out from before you, even the two kings of the Amorites; but not with thy sword, nor with thy bow. {13} And I have given you a land for which ye did not labour, and cities which ye built not, and ye dwell in them; of the vineyards and oliveyards which ye planted not do ye eat. {14} Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. {15} And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD. {16} And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods; {17} For the LORD our God, he it is that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people

through whom we passed: {18} And the LORD drave out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt in the land: therefore will we also serve the LORD; for he is our God. {19} And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the LORD: for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. {20} If ye forsake the LORD, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good. {21} And the people said unto Joshua, Nay; but we will serve the LORD. {22} And Joshua said unto the people, Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the LORD, to serve him. And they said, We are witnesses. {23} Now therefore put away, said he, the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the LORD God of Israel. {24} And the people said unto Joshua, The LORD our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey. {25} So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. {26} And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak, that was by the sanctuary of the LORD. {27} And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the LORD which he spake unto us: it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God. {28} So Joshua let the people depart, every man unto his inheritance. {29} And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an hundred and ten years old. {30} And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnathserah, which is in mount Ephraim, on the north side of the hill of Gaash. {31} And Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the LORD, that he had done for Israel. {32} And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for an hundred pieces of silver: and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph. {33} And Eleazar the son of Aaron died; and they buried him in a hill that pertained to Phinehas his son, which was given him in mount Ephraim.”



- S ONLY A FEW OLD TESTAMENT KINGS OF ISRAEL** could be considered GODLY LEADERS. Some of the godly were: **David, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah** and **Josiah**. **HAD JOSHUA BEEN ALIVE** during the days of the kings, he certainly would have been listed among those godly kings.
- S NONE OF THOSE GODLY KINGS WERE PERFECT.** Each one had his own failures that could be documented. **JOSHUA** was not perfect either. For example, Joshua erred in **MAKING A TREATY WITH THE GIBEONITES** in **chapter 9**. The congregation was **SO**

UPSET that they **murmured** against Joshua and the other leaders (9:18). Scripture tells us he made his mistake because he did not pray before agreeing to the treaty (9:14). In spite of Joshua's failure, HE WAS STILL A **GODLY MAN**. His godly character was manifest even unto his latter days in which he "**waxed old**" (Jos 23:1).

**S** In those latter days, **JOSHUA ASSEMBLED ISRAEL TOGETHER** to share one last exhortation before passing on. They were assembled AT A PLACE CALLED **SHECHEM** (V. 1). **SHECHEM WAS RICH IN BIBLICAL HISTORY and SIGNIFICANCE:**

**1) ABRAHAM** left the city of Ur and traveled with his family to a place called Haran. He stayed at Haran until Terah, his father, died. After Terah's death, God told Abraham to get up from that land and go to a place God would show him. He **JOURNEYED SOUTHWARD** until he came to a place called **SHECHEM** (KJV "Sichem"). In the valley where Shechem was located, God spoke to Abraham.

**(Gen 12:6-7 NIV)**, "Abram traveled through the land as far as the site of the great tree of Moreh at **SHECHEM**. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. {7} **The LORD** appeared to Abram and **SAID, "TO YOUR OFFSPRING I WILL GIVE THIS LAND."**" **ABRAHAM BUILT AN ALTAR THERE** to the LORD, who had appeared to him."

IT WAS AT SHECHEM THAT **GOD FIRST PROMISED THE LAND TO ISRAEL**. In a response of worship, **ABRAM BUILT AN ALTAR TO GOD** at Shechem.

**2) JACOB** was the grandson of Abraham. HE HAD A **PERSONAL REVIVAL** WHILE AT SHECHEM. God told Jacob to return to **BETHEL** where God had first appeared to him years earlier as he ran from his brother Esau. Before returning to Bethel, Jacob said to all who were with him:

**(Gen 35:2)**, ". . . **Put away the strange gods** that are among you, and **be clean, and change your garments:**

**(Gen 35:4)**, "And they gave unto Jacob all the **strange gods** which were in their hand, and all their **earrings** which were in their ears; and Jacob **hid them under the oak** which was by **SHECHEM."**

**3)** Many years after the time of Jacob, Israel crossed Jordan and entered the land of Canaan. AFTER CONQUERING JERICHO AND AI, **JOSHUA ASSEMBLED ALL ISRAEL** AT SHECHEM (Joshua 8). **IT IS NO COINCIDENCE** that Joshua took Israel back to the place where God had first promised the land to Abraham. Perhaps some Israelites were wondering what they were doing in that land. God's answer to any doubters was they were there because God had promised the land to them. It would be in that land where the Lord Jesus would someday come and die for the sins of the world.

Shechem was located BETWEEN TWO MOUNTAINS called **EBAL** and **GERIZIM**. In Joshua 8, half the tribes of Israel stood on one mountain and the other half stood on the other mountain as they pronounced God's blessings and cursings. It was between those mountains they verbally declared what the results of their obedience or disobedience would be. At that location they constructed **AN ALTAR BUILT OF UNCUT STONES** upon which was written **A COPY OF THE LAW** of Moses so that all Israel could see and remember (8:31-32). That altar served as a standing stone.

**4) JOSHUA 24** PRESENTS THE FOURTH SIGNIFICANT EVENT that took place at Shechem. **JOSHUA WAS OLD** and about to go the way of all the earth when he **CALLED ISRAEL** together at Shechem for **ONE FINAL EXHORTATION**. There is good reason to believe **the altar** that had been built in Joshua 8 was still standing as a reminder of God's past dealings with Israel. Israel's assembly at Shechem WOULD HAVE BROUGHT BACK **MEMORIES** of the events from chapter 8 that had taken place twenty or thirty years earlier.

**S** **JOSHUA'S BURDEN** AT THAT GATHERING WAS TWOFOLD. He had a burden for **that present generation**. He also had a burden **for future generations** to come. He **wanted to make sure** that his generation **lived in such a manner so as to pass their spiritual heritage on** to generations to come.

**S** AT SHECHEM JOSHUA GAVE TO ISRAEL **GOD'S FORMULA** FOR REMAINING IN THE LAND UNDER GOD'S BLESSING. God wanted **TO BLESS** Israel. God wanted His people **TO SUCCEED**.

**S** **GOD WANTS ALL HIS PEOPLE TO SUCCEED**. From a Biblical perspective, **SUCCESS IS *finding God's will and staying in it***. God wants you to succeed.

**S THE THEME** of Joshua's message **WAS HOW TO SUCCEED WITH GOD'S BLESSING**. THE ONLY WAY THEY WOULD EVER DO THAT WOULD BE FOR THEM **TO STAY THE COURSE**. He taught them how to remain faithful for **THE LONG HAUL**.

- S THREE THINGS ARE ESSENTIAL TO STAY THE COURSE:**
- I. **REMEMBER THAT GOD CARES FOR YOU**
  - II. **RECEIVE GOD'S COMMANDS**
  - III. **RESOLVE TO CHOOSE JEHOVAH GOD ABOVE ALL OTHER "gods"**

## **I. REMEMBER THAT GOD CARES FOR YOU**

JOSHUA'S FIRST ACT WAS TO **RECOUNT GOD'S BLESSINGS IN THEIR LIVES**. His account of God's blessings is filled with **VERBS** which are preceded by the personal pronoun **"I."** These verbs **REVEAL GOD AS ACTIVE** and **INVOLVED** in the lives of His people.

- (1) **(V. 3), I TOOK YOUR FATHER ABRAHAM** from the other side of the flood. . . . **[I] LED HIM** throughout all the land of Canaan. . . . **[I] MULTIPLIED HIS SEED**.
- (2) **(V. 5), I SENT MOSES** and **AARON** .
- (3) **(V. 5), I PLAGUED EGYPT**
- (4) **(V. 5), I BROUGHT YOU OUT**.
- (5) **(V. 8), I BROUGHT YOU INTO THE LAND** of the Amorites . . . **I GAVE THEM** into your hand.
- (6) **(V. 10), I DELIVERED YOU** out of . . . **[BALAK'S] HAND**.
- (7) **(V. 11) . . . I DELIVERED THEM** into your hand: **THE MEN OF Jericho, the Amorites, Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Girschites, Hivites, and the Jebusites**.
- (8) **(V. 12), And I SENT THE HORNET** before you. (The people of the land were terrified of Israel. God had already provided for Israel's success before their battles ever began.)
- (9) **(V. 13), And I HAVE GIVEN YOU A LAND** for which YE DID NOT LABOR, and **CITIES WHICH YE BUILT NOT**, and ye dwell in them; of the **VINEYARDS** and **OLIVEYARDS WHICH YE PLANTED NOT** do ye eat."

**S GOD HAD BLESSED ISRAEL BEYOND MEASURE.**

- C HE HAD PROVIDED** for them by supernatural means.
- C HE HAD PRECEDED** them in battle.
- C HE HAD PROTECTED** them in conflict.
- C HE HAD PROSPERED** in measure beyond description.

**S JOSHUA TOLD ISRAEL TO REMEMBER** THAT GOD CARED FOR THEM! He told them to **LOOK BACK** and consider God's past blessings.

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One very important element for **STAYING THE COURSE** is **A GOOD MEMORY** related to God's past blessings in your life. He has demonstrated His care in **A THOUSAND DIFFERENT WAYS**. It does one good to **COUNT GOD'S MANY BLESSINGS AND NAME THEM ONE BY ONE**.

- (1) **AS GOD HAD PROVIDED FOR ISRAEL, SO GOD HAS PROVIDED FOR US**. Think back on your life and consider where you were when you first began to walk with the Lord. Matthew 6 has proven true at every point.

**(Mat 6:25-33)**, "Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? {26} Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? {27} Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? {28} And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: {29} And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. {30} Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? {31} Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? {32} (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. {33} But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. {34} Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

(2) **AS GOD HAD PROTECTED ISRAEL, SO GOD HAS PROTECTED US.** Think back on your life and consider how God has been your protection.

(3) **AS GOD HAD PROSPERED ISRAEL, SO GOD HAS PROSPERED US.** God gave **land, cities** and **vineyards** to Israel, none of which they had built or planted. I think of the ways God has provided for **Richland Baptist Church**. Not many years ago we raised the budget twice in one year and God provided everything we needed with abundance. Every time a genuine need arises, God provides. Someone has accurately stated, *when God guides, God provides.*

**S** GOD CALLS ON US TO REMEMBER HIS GOODNESS. THE BIBLE OFTEN TELLS US TO REMEMBER.

(1) **REGARDING THE LORD'S SUPPER**

☪ **(Luke 22:19)**, "... This is my body which is given for you: this do in **REMEMBRANCE** of me."

(2) **CONCERNING THE CHURCH AT SARDIS**

☪ **(Rev 3:3)**, "**REMEMBER** therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent . . . "

(3) **CONCERNING THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS**

☪ **(Rev 2:5)**, "**REMEMBER** therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, . . . "

**S** When one of God's children takes a serious trip down **MEMORY LANE**, they discover that God has cared for them in a multitude of ways. We discover that **we really can cast all our care upon Him, for he cares for us** (1 Pet 5:7). God really does want the best for us.

HOW TO STAY THE COURSE

I. **REMEMBER THAT GOD CARES FOR YOU**

## II. RECEIVE GOD'S COMMANDS

**S** IT IS TRUE these commands are taken from the **O.T.** and are addressed specifically to the nation of Israel. IT IS ALSO TRUE that **N.T. EQUIVALENT VERSES** can be found for each O.T. command.

**S** GOD'S COMMANDS TO ISRAEL WERE **TWOFOLD**:

### #1. FEAR THE LORD

**(V. 14)**, "Now therefore **FEAR** the LORD, . . . "

THERE ARE **TWO KINDS OF FEAR**:

(1) **UNHOLY / UNGODLY FEAR**

**(1 John 4:18)**, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."

(2) **HOLY GODLY FEAR**

**(Luke 12:5)**, "... I will forewarn you whom ye shall **FEAR**: **FEAR** him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I SAY UNTO YOU, **FEAR HIM**."

**(JOS 24:14)**, "Now therefore **FEAR** the LORD, . . . "

**S** "**FEAR**" (*yaw-ray'*) has **different shades of meaning**. It can mean:

(1) "**TO BE AFRAID**" / "**TO DREAD**"

**JACOB** USED "**YARE**" WHEN HE HAD TO FACE HIS BROTHER ESAU. **(Gen 32:11)**, "Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I **FEAR** him, . . . "

(2) "**TO REVERENCE**" / "**TO STAND IN AWE OF**"

**AN ANGEL** USED "**YARE**" TO DESCRIBE **ABRAHAM**. **(Gen 22:12)**, "... I **KNOW THAT THOU FEAREST GOD**, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me."

**S** THE PHRASE, "**THE FEAR OF THE LORD**" appears at least **27X's** in Scripture. **HOLY FEAR** is a **reverential trust** in God that results in a desire to **honor, reverence, respect** and **obey** God.

SCRIPTURE SAYS MUCH ABOUT FEARING GOD:

☪ **(JOS 24:14)**, "Now therefore **FEAR** the LORD, . . . "

☪ **(Eccl 12:13)**, "**FEAR GOD**, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."

- C **(Psa 2:11)**, ""Serve the LORD with **FEAR**, and rejoice with **TREMBLING**."
- C **(Isa 8:13)**, "" . . . Let him be your **FEAR**, and let him be your **DREAD**."
- C **(Ps 111:10)**, ""THE **FEAR OF THE LORD IS** the beginning of wisdom . . . "
- C **(1 Pet 2:17)**, "" . . . **FEAR GOD** . . . "
- C **ISAIAH SAW GOD AND SAID , "WOE IS ME, FOR I AM UNDONE"** (Isa 6:5)
- C AFTER GOD SPOKE TO **JOB**, JOB SAID: "**WHEREFORE I ABHOR MYSELF, AND REPENT IN DUST AND ASHES**" (Job 42:6).
- C WHEN **EZEKIEL** saw God upon His throne, he **FELL UPON HIS FACE** before God (Ezek 1:28).
- C WHEN **JOHN** saw God, he fell down before God **AS IF DEAD** (Rev 1:17).
- C WHEN **PETER** met Jesus, he fell down at Jesus' knees and said, "Depart from him for I am a sinful man, O Lord" (Luke 5:8).
- C EVEN **JESUS** MANIFEST GODLY FEAR **(Heb 5:7)**, "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that HE **FEARED**;"

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**S THE FEAR OF GOD IS AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT IN WORSHIP.**

- C WHEN A PEOPLE BEGIN TO LOSE **THEIR SENSE OF AWE** toward God, it is only a matter of time until **their spiritual fires begin to dim**. **Apathy** and **indifference** rush in to fill the vacuum created by the diminishing of godly fear.

- C I should ask myself, "Does my worship of God have about it the essential elements of reverence toward God?" IS THERE AN ELEMENT OF GODLY FEAR IN MY **singing, preaching, praying, giving, going** and **listening** that manifests an awe of God? Do I truly stand in reverence of God?
- S JOSHUA SAID TO ISRAEL: **(JOS 24:14)**, "NOW THEREFORE **FEAR THE LORD**. . . "
- S GOD SAYS THE SAME THING **TO OUR NATION**. If there was ever a time when we as a nation needed a good dose of the fear of God, it is now! **WHEN PEOPLE REJECT THE FEAR OF GOD, THEY OPEN THE DOORS TO A THOUSAND OTHER UNGODLY FEARS**. If we do not possess a godly fear, then we will possess an ungodly fear. Ungodly fear is a torment and detriment to any people and to any nation.

II. RECEIVED GOD'S COMMANDS

#1. **FEAR THE LORD**

**#2. SERVE THE LORD IN SINCERITY AND TRUTH**

**S FOCUS ON THREE WORDS:**

**[ #1 ] . "SERVE"**

**(V. 14)**, "Now therefore fear the LORD, and **SERVE HIM** . . . "

- S "SERVE" is one of the words Joshua used to **describe a person's proper relationship to God**. It was such an important word that Joshua used it at least **14X's** in Jos. 24.

- S **THE HEBREW WORD FOR "SERVE" IS " ABAD "** ("aw-bad"). IT DENOTES "**WORK**." That Hebrew word was used to describe God sending **ADAM** forth to "**TO TILL THE GROUND** (Gen 3:23). Any farmer can tell you that tilling the ground is hard work. **JOSHUA** told Israel that their relationship to God was **TO BE ACCOMPANIED BY WORK**.

- S NOW, THEIR WORKS **DID NOT SAVE** them any more than our works save us, but their works **DID DEMONSTRATE** the fruit of a proper relationship with God (Eph 2:8-9; Gen 15:6; Hab 2:4).

S **SOME PEOPLE** are convinced that since they were not saved by works, that their works are not important. That is a horribly wrong conclusion.

C **(Eph 2:10)**, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

C **(James 2:20)**, "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?"

S WE LIVE IN A DAY WHEN **SOME PEOPLE SEEK FOR A CHURCH** where **THE LEAST AMOUNT OF WORK IS EXPECTED**. They seek a church that **SERVES "DIET CHRISTIANITY."** In the *diet church* you find **shorter sermons, briefer prayers, low calorie Bible study and little visitation**. The problem with **DIET CHRISTIANITY** is it is much like **DIET POP**, it makes you think you are drinking the real thing, but you never gain any spiritual weight.

S **"LESS SERVICE"** might appeal to the world, but it does not appeal to God. **LAZINESS IS A CURSE IN ANY SPIRITUAL SERVICE TO THE LORD**. Jesus made a statement regarding "works" to every one of the seven churches of Revelation. He said, "I know thy works."

S **(NASB Jer 48:10)**, "'Cursed be the one who does the LORD'S work **NEGLIGENTLY**, . . . "

S JOSHUA TOLD ISRAEL:  
**(V. 14)**, "Now therefore fear the LORD, and **SERVE HIM** . . ."

[#1]. "SERVE"

## [#2]. "SINCERITY"

**(V. 14)**, ". . . SERVE HIM IN **SINCERITY** . . . "

S **"TAMIYM"** (taw-meem') MEANS:

C "WITH **ENTIRETY**"

C "WITH **INTEGRITY**"

S **THE NEW TESTAMENT ISSUES THE SAME COMMAND: (Phil 1:10 KJV)**, ". . . That ye may be **SINCERE** and without offence till the day of Christ;"

THE GREEK WORD TRANSLATED "**SINCERE**" MEANS:

C "**Tested by the sunlight and proven to be genuine.**"

C **THAYER** writes: "**Found pure when unfolded and examined by the sun's light.**"

**THE FARMER** who raises chickens to sell their **EGGS** at the market can illustrate the meaning of this word. A childhood friend of mine grew up on a chicken farm. They sold eggs at the market. I remember how they took each egg and held it up to a bright light. The light would shine into the egg showing it either to be fresh and edible, or clouded and rotten. You could use this Greek word to describe **A MARKETABLE EGG**.

THE ENGLISH WORD "SINCERE" is based on the **LATIN**. The Latin word for "**SINCERE**" means **TO BE WITHOUT WAX**. I have a hand carved wooden man in my home that has a split in it. The wood was carved before the wood was dry. As it dried, the wood cracked open. Unless you look closely, you would never know the carving had a crack because it has been filled in with wax the same color as the wood. In that sense "WITHOUT WAX" speaks of that which is pure.

**NATHANAEL** IS A GOOD EXAMPLE OF BIBLICAL SINCERITY. According to Jesus, Nathanael was **A MAN WITHOUT WAX** in his character: ". . . Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" (John 1:47)

S **JOSHUA** was saying to Israel that they should **LIVE SUCH EXEMPLARY LIVES** that when they were held up to God's light, they would prove to be genuine. They needed to **remain such** that nothing blocked God's light from shining through to the rest of the world.

S **GOD SAYS TO EACH OF US:**

**(Mat 5:16)**, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

[#1]. "SERVE"

[#2]. "SINCERITY"

### [#3]. "TRUTH"

(V. 14), "... SERVE HIM IN SINCERITY and IN TRUTH. . . "

S THE SCRIPTURE SAYS SO MUCH ABOUT TRUTH.

C (John 4:24), "God is a Spirit: and they that **WORSHIP HIM** must worship him in spirit and **IN TRUTH.**"

C **PILATE** once asked Jesus, "**WHAT IS TRUTH?**" (John 8:38).

S THE BIBLE TELLS US **FOUR THINGS** THAT ARE "TRUTH":

& **JEHOVAH GOD IS TRUTH:**  
(Psa 31:5), "... O LORD GOD OF TRUTH."

& **JESUS CHRIST IS TRUTH:**  
(John 14:6), "... I am the way, **THE TRUTH**, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

& **THE HOLY SPIRIT IS TRUTH:**  
(1 John 5:6), "... **THE SPIRIT IS TRUTH.**"

& **THE BIBLE IS TRUTH:**  
(Psa 119:160), "Thy word is **TRUE** from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever."

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GOD'S TRUTH SETS UP GUARD OVER A BELIEVER'S HEART AND LIFE. Taken from the context of the Book of Joshua it can be said that truth was designed to set up guard over the nation of Israel.

C (Psa 91:4), "... **HIS TRUTH** shall be thy **SHIELD AND BUCKLER.**"

C (Psa 40:11), "... Let thy lovingkindness and **THY TRUTH** continually **PRESERVE ME.**"

C (Prov 12:19), "The **LIP OF TRUTH** shall be **ESTABLISHED FOR EVER:** but a lying tongue is but for a moment."

C JESUS TOLD OF **A WISE MAN WHO** built his house upon a rock. When the wind and rain beat against it, it did not fall. Jesus revealed that **ROCK** was the Word of God. God's Word of truth proved to be the wise man's protection. (Mat 7:24-27)

C **TRUTH IS ONE PIECE OF GOD'S SPIRITUAL ARMOR FOR US:**

(Eph 6:14), "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, . . . "

HOW TO STAY THE COURSE:

I. **REMEMBER THAT GOD CARES FOR YOU**

II. **RECEIVE GOD'S COMMANDS**

#1. **FEAR THE LORD**

#2. **SERVE THE LORD IN SINCERITY AND TRUTH**

### III. RESOLVE TO CHOOSE JEHOVAH GOD

#### ABOVE ALL OTHER "gods"

(V. 14), "Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and **put away the gods** . . . "

JOSHUA LISTED A SMORGASBORD OF "gods":

(1) THE GODS OF **EGYPT** (V. 14)

Many were the objects worshiped by the Egyptians: hawks, cats, bulls, etc. In fact, the plagues of Egypt were directed at Egypt's gods (Num 33:4; Ex 12:12).

(2) THE GODS WHICH **YOUR FATHERS SERVED** (V. 15).

Those would have been the gods Abraham encountered at Ur before he crossed the Euphrates river headed toward the land of Canaan.

(3) THE GODS **OF THE AMORITES** (V. 15)

The god's of the Amorites would have represented the pagan idols in the land of Canaan when Israel first conquered it. They worshiped Nature-gods such as Baals and Ashtoreths. Their worship was sensual and immoral.

THE CHOICES ARE **NO DIFFERENT TODAY.** The WORLD STILL OFFERS A **SMORGASBORD OF "gods"** TO CHOOSE FROM. Their

names may have changed, but the options are just as plenteous as they were in Joshua's day. **Name any sinful desire** and a religion can be found that will sanction it. If a person wants to feel good about their sin, they can find a religion that will sanction it.

**(V. 14)**, "Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and **PUT AWAY THE GODS** . . . "

**S YEARS BEFORE JOSHUA HAD ARRIVED AT SHECHEM, JACOB HAD A PERSONAL REVIVAL** in which he buried pagan gods under an oak tree at Shechem (Gen 35:2, 4).

**YEARS AFTER JOSHUA, EZEKIEL WOULD PROCLAIM TO ISRAEL: (Ezek 14:6)**, "Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations."

**IN THE DAYS OF JOSHUA**, Israel was told to **PUT AWAY THEIR GODS**.

**S THESE FACTS MAKE A PERSON ASK**, In the days of **JACOB**, why **DID** his household possess strange "gods?" In the days of **EZEKIEL**, why did Israel possess strange "gods?" In the days of **JOSHUA**, why did Israel possess strange "gods?" Why did Joshua have to tell Israel to put away gods and serve the LORD?

**S PERHAPS THEY POSSESSED THEM FOR THE SAME REASON SOME "BELIEVERS" POSSESS THEM TODAY. DR. FRED SWANK** was the pastor of Sagamore Hill Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas. He went overseas many years ago on a mission trip. While overseas he was soul-sickened as he saw all the idols on the streets, in the shops and in the houses. They worshiped wood, rocks and clay. He said to himself, "I'll be glad when I get back to America where idols are not worshiped."

He did return to the United States and the next Sunday morning he was soul-sickened again. He was in his office getting ready for his morning sermon. The phone rang and an elderly lady needed a ride to church. No one was there to help her, so Dr. Swank went himself. On the way to her house, he passed the house of a member who had not been to church for weeks. He thought to himself, they are probably **ASLEEP**. A car whizzed around him pulling a **BOAT** headed for the lake. He passed another member's house and the man was outside **MOWING** his lawn. That man had no intention of going to God's house to worship that day. As the moments passed,

Dr. Swank remembered the idols while overseas and he realized, "You know, we have idols here, too. American idols are cars, boats, lawn mowers and T.V.'s, but they are idols nonetheless.

**S AN IDOL IS ANYTHING** that has been **given preeminence** above God. A person can give their heart to **money, a job, racing, golfing, hunting, fishing, cars, yards, clubs, family, pleasure, ease, retirement, etc.** Anything in our life that takes precedence over God is a "god."

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PUTTING "gods" OUT OF THEIR LIVES WAS ONLY HALF OF JOSHUA'S COMMAND.

**(V. 14)**, "Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods . . . **AND SERVE YE THE LORD.**"

**S THAT IS NOT A DIFFICULT DECISION CONSIDERING WHAT GOD HAS REVEALED REGARDING HIMSELF:**

**(Isa 45:5)**, "I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: . . . "

**(Isa 45:18)**, "For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD; and there is none else."

**JOSHUA REVEALS HIS CHOICE:**

**(V. 15)**, "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, **CHOOSE YOU** this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: **BUT AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE, WE WILL SERVE THE LORD.**"

**S IT ALL BOILS DOWN TO CHOICES! JOSHUA SAYS TO EACH OF US:**

**(V. 15)**, "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve."

**S ELIJAH SAYS TO EACH OF US:**

**(1 Ki 18:21)**, ". . . How long halt ye between two opinions? **IF THE LORD BE GOD**, follow him: but **IF BAAL**, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word."

**S SOME DADS NEED TO DO WHAT JACOB DID:**  
**(Gen 35:2)**, “. . . Put away the strange gods that are among you, and **be clean**, and **change your garments:**”

**S REVIVAL COMES WHEN** a person CHOOSES TO PUT GOD FIRST ABOVE ALL OTHER “gods.” **REVIVAL COMES WHEN** a person CHOOSES TO GIVE THE LORD GOD PREEMINENCE in every area of one’s life: **business, marriage, family, leisure**, etc.

LISTEN TO **ISRAEL’S RESPONSE** TO JOSHUA:

**(VV. 16, 18)**, “And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods; . . . **{18}** . . . therefore will we also serve the LORD; for he is our God.”

**JOSHUA’S RESPONSE** WAS SURPRISING:

**(V. 19)**, “And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the LORD: for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.”

**S JOSHUA MUST HAVE DETECTED AN ELEMENT OF OVERCONFIDENCE** in their response.

- C PERHAPS THEY PRESUMED THEY WERE BEYOND FAILURE?** They might have concluded that **obedience would come without any real effort.**
- C** If that was their conclusion, they must have forgotten the generation before them that stood at Mt. Sinai and said, “. . . **All that the LORD hath spoken we will do . . .**” (Exo 19:8). **A FEW WEEKS LATER** they were worshiping a golden calf. They had forgotten how easy it was for **MOSES** to sin by becoming angry. They had forgotten how easy it was for Joshua to sin by making a treaty with the Gibeonites.

**S (1 Cor 10:12)**, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”

**S (1 Cor 9:27)**, “But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”

THE PEOPLE SAID TO JOSHUA:

- C (V. 21)**, “. . . Nay; but we will serve the LORD.”
- C (V. 24)**, “The LORD our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey.”

JOSHUA’S RESPONSE TO THEM:

- C (V. 25-27)**, “So Joshua **MADE A COVENANT** with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem. {26} And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and **TOOK A GREAT STONE**, and set it up there **UNDER AN OAK**, that was by the sanctuary of the LORD. {27} And Joshua said unto all the people, **BEHOLD, THIS STONE SHALL BE A WITNESS UNTO US;** for it hath heard all the words of the LORD which he spake unto us: it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God.”

**C ISRAEL HAD OFTEN USED STONES** TO BEAR TESTIMONY TO SIGNIFICANT EVENTS.

**C WE WERE TOLD THE PURPOSE FOR THE STONES AT GILGAL.**

**(Josh 4:21)**, “. . . When your children shall ask their fathers in time to come, saying, ‘What mean these stones?’ {22} Then ye shall let your children know, saying, ‘Israel came over this Jordan on dry land.’”

**NAME SOME OF THE STANDING STONES IN YOUR LIFE.**

## HOW TO STAY THE COURSE

- I. **REMEMBER THAT GOD CARES** FOR YOU
- II. **RECEIVE GOD’S COMMANDS**
  - #1. **FEAR THE LORD**
  - #2. **SERVE THE LORD** IN SINCERITY AND TRUTH
- III. **RESOLVE TO CHOOSE JEHOVAH GOD** ABOVE ALL OTHER “gods”