



February 2, 2014  
Joshua 23-24  
“Joshua’s Final Counsel”  
Pastor Gary Hamrick

There are a few times in the Bible when we find a record of the final words of dying men; their words of counsel, exhortation, blessings and warnings to the next generation. Examples include Jacob, King David, Paul, and Joshua.

[Genesis 49](#) records Jacob’s final words as he leaned upon his staff and blessed and prophesied over his 12 sons. We read about King David in [1 Kings 2](#), when he gave a final charge to his teenage son, Solomon, as he turned over the reigns of the kingdom to him before he died.<sup>1</sup> We read Paul’s final words of instruction and encouragement to his protégé, Pastor Timothy, throughout the epistle of [2 Timothy](#), before Paul was beheaded for the cause of Christ.

Joshua, after having lived a full life, first as a slave in Egypt, then as Moses’ aide, then as a warrior, and finally as the leader of Israel, gave his final counsel at the age of 110. He gathered the leaders of Israel and said, “*I am old and well advanced in years.*”<sup>2</sup> The Hebrew literally means, “I am old and in the days of the setting sun” or “I am old and in the twilight days of my life.” He later said, “*Now I am about to go the way of the earth,*” which was a statement about death and how we all return to the dust of the ground from which the human race was formed.<sup>3 4</sup>

So Joshua, just before he died, exhorted the leaders of Israel concerning the whole nation, and in this study, we’ll learn the importance of remembering what he had to say about remembering God, obeying God, loving God, and serving God.

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<sup>1</sup> King David was about 70 years old, and Solomon was about 15 years old.

<sup>2</sup> [Joshua 23:2](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Joshua 23:14](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Genesis 3:19](#) - “... you [will] return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.”

## Remember God

1. In [Joshua 23:3-5](#), Joshua spoke about God being the reason for all they enjoyed, as well as how they entered, conquered, and occupied the land, when he said, *“You yourselves have seen everything the Lord your God has done to all these nations for your sake; it was the Lord your God who fought for you. Remember how I have allotted as an inheritance for your tribes all the land of the nations that remain – the nations I conquered – between the Jordan and the Great Sea <sup>5</sup>in the west. The Lord your God himself will drive them out of your way. He will push them out before you, and you will take possession of their land, as the Lord your God promised you.”*
2. Joshua emphasized what God had done on their behalf and he called them to always remember the source of their comfort and success.
3. We read in [Deuteronomy 6:10-12](#), that Moses made similar remarks to Israel, saying: *“When the Lord your God brings you into the land he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you – a land with large, flourishing cities you did not build, houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant – then when you eat and are satisfied, be careful that you do not forget the Lord, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.”*
4. Joshua’s counsel is just as true for us today as it was for his generation: “When you are living the good life, you must never forget that God is the one who gave you everything you enjoy.”
5. Unfortunately, like the Israelites, our tendency when things are going well is to forget God, and yet, thankfully, he doesn’t withhold his goodness from us just to keep us dependent upon him.
6. Yet, even when we forget him, still God blesses us, while at the same time attaching a warning that we are not to forget him.
7. The challenge for us is to remember the Lord, not so much when times are tough, because that’s when we naturally cry out to him, but when times are good!
8. Moses repeated this theme in [Deuteronomy 8:11-14](#), when he said: *“Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, and when your herds*

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<sup>5</sup> The Mediterranean Sea

*and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God..."*

### Obey God

9. **Joshua 23:6-8** - “ *‘Be very strong; be careful to obey all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, without turning aside to the right or to the left. Do not associate with these nations that remain among you; do not invoke the names of their gods or swear by them. You must not serve them or bow down to them. But you are to hold fast to the Lord your God, as you have until now.’* ”
10. Joshua was among the first generation of Hebrews who came out of slavery in Egypt with Moses.
  - a. He witnessed a lot of things along the way, and he saw a lot of people die because of their disobedience.
  - b. He witnessed venomous snakes devour people because they complained about food and water.
  - c. He witnessed Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and 250 of their followers swallowed up by the ground, because they were in rebellion against Moses, God’s chosen leader.
  - d. He witnessed 3,000 die after he and Moses descended from Mt. Sinai with the Ten Commandments, because they had indulged in idolatry and sexual immorality.
  - e. He witnessed 24,000 die in a plague, because Israelite men engaged in sexual immorality with Moabite women.
  - f. He witnessed Achan and his family be killed for their disobedience.
  - g. He witnessed an entire generation, except for his friend Caleb, die in the wilderness because of their disobedience against God.
11. Having witnessed all of these things, for the sake of the living, he said, “You must obey God!”
12. Obeying God means obeying God’s Word.<sup>6</sup>
13. **Romans 2:13** - “*For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God’s sight, but it is those who obey law who will be declared righteous.*”
14. We learn that obedience is an indication that we actually know God, when we read in **1 John 2:3**: “*We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands.*”

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<sup>6</sup> In **Joshua 23:6**, when he told the people to “*obey all that [was] written in the Book of the Law of Moses,*” he was referring to the first five books of the Bible.

15. Joshua's counsel was to obey **all** of God's Word, because partial obedience is actually complete disobedience.
  - a. It's like being a little loyal or a little faithful or a little pregnant; you either are or you're not!
  - b. We can't pick and choose the parts of the Bible we want to obey and the parts we don't.
  - c. We can't pick and choose to obey the parts that are convenient, and disregard the parts that we might consider to be inconvenient.
  - d. We can't pick and choose to obey the parts we like and disregard the parts we don't like.
16. The Bible is intended to shape our lives, not suit our lifestyles!
17. The Bible confronts us at the core of who we are and challenges us even at the level of our thoughts and attitudes.
18. **Hebrews 4:12** - *"For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."*
19. The Bible is not to be treated like a buffet, from which we take the things we like and leave the things we don't like.

#### Love God

20. **Joshua 23:9-11** - *" 'The Lord has driven out before you great and powerful nations; to this day no one has been able to withstand you. One of you routs a thousand, because the Lord your God fights for you, just as he promised. So be very careful to love the Lord your God.' "*
21. Love and obedience go together, because it's true that we will not obey him unless we love him; and we will not love God unless we obey him.
22. **John 14:15** - *" 'If you love me, you will obey what I command.' "*
23. **John 14:23-24a** - *"Jesus replied, 'If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching.' "*

24. According to [Mark 12:30](#) we are supposed to *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.”*
- The Greek word for love is agapao, which means “a love that totally gives itself over to something.”
  - Agapao is not just an emotional feeling, but also an intentional relinquishing of our lives to something or someone.
  - Loving God means we no longer live for ourselves, because we’ve purposed in our heart to live according to his will and his desires.
  - [1 John 4:19](#) - *“We love because he first loved us.”*

### Serve God

25. [Joshua 24:14-24](#) is probably the most well known part of his farewell speech.
- Joshua used the word “serve” 13 times in these verses.
26. The first part of this passage makes for a great plaque, but it should mean more to us than a slogan, because Joshua made this statement as a contrast to competing gods (small “g”).
27. Joshua referred to *“the gods of your forefathers beyond the River,”* which was a reference to Abraham before God called him out of the city of Ur, because Abraham worshipped many gods when he lived in Babylonia.<sup>7</sup>
28. Joshua mentioned the gods of Egypt, referring to the polytheistic religion of the Egyptians, which the Israelites were exposed to during their 400 years of slavery.
29. Joshua mentioned the gods of the Amorites, referring to the pagan deities worshipped in that area.
30. He spoke about these gods, because, apparently, some of them had secretly slipped into idolatry.
- [Joshua 24:23](#) - *“ ‘Now then,’ said Joshua, ‘throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your heart to the Lord, the God of Israel.’ ”*
31. Joshua told them they had to make a clean break from the past and insulate themselves from the ungodly influences of the present, so they wouldn’t slip into the worship of anything other than the true and living God!

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<sup>7</sup> The principle god of Babylon was the moon god, Sin.

32. We might conclude that Joshua was saying, “I’m not going back, and I won’t allow the worldly influences of the present deter me from serving the Lord until I breathe my last. You will always serve something, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!”

### Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [Joshua 23:1-8, 24:28-33](#) to provide an overview for this study.
3. Allow the people in your group to share their experiences about times when they’ve forgotten the Lord or times when they’ve remembered the Lord.
4. Read and discuss [Deuteronomy 6:10-12](#) and [Deuteronomy 8:11-14](#).
5. Do you think you are more likely or less likely to remember God when you’re experiencing good times?
6. What are some of the ways you’re obeying the Lord’s will and the Lord’s ways? (See #9 above)
7. Spend time talking about all of the things Joshua witnessed and how important he felt it was to emphasize the importance of obeying all of God’s Word. (See #10 above)
8. Read and discuss [1 John 2:3](#), and focus on what it means to *know* the Lord. (Emphasis added)
9. How have you been tempted to pick and choose what you believe and practice from the Bible?
10. Read and discuss [Hebrews 4:12](#).
11. Would you say your love for the Lord stagnant or growing?
12. Do you agree with Pastor Gary’s statement that love and obedience go together? (See #21 and #22 above)
13. Read and discuss [John 14:23-24a](#) and [Mark 12:30](#).

14. In what ways do you think the Lord is calling you to serve him this year?
15. Allow the people in your group to share their thoughts and ideas about ways your K-Group could serve together.
16. If your friends, neighbors, and co-workers were asked to rate you and your family based on [Joshua 24:14](#), what would they say?
17. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: remember the Lord at all times, in both the good times and the tough times; choose to obey his will and his ways; love the Lord with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength; listen to the Spirit's voice as he calls them to serve in Kingdom work.