



A MODEL OF OBEDIENCE • TOTAL OBEDIENCE TO GOD •

JOSHUA 10:16–11:23 • 03/25/2018

MAIN POINT

God calls us to a life of complete obedience, where every day is devoted to following His will.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What is the most boring part of your daily routine—something you find yourself doing over and over again?

How different would your day be if that was no longer a part of your routine?

Do you ever wrestle with feeling like your life should be more extraordinary as a follower of Christ? How do you deal with those types of feelings?

As Christians, we know that God has given us a great responsibility and calling—we are tasked with being His ambassadors in the world. Yet day in and day out, we find ourselves doing things like washing dishes, spending hours on our commute, or holding a child’s hand through homework. These things don’t feel extraordinary, and it’s hard to understand how they help us change the world. But what God desires from us more than anything else is complete and total obedience to Him. Sometimes this looks like great conquests, and other days it looks like nothing more than chores.

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UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Read Joshua 10:16–11:13 to your group. What is taking place in these verses?

Much of the book of Joshua describes the Jewish army’s conquest of Canaan, the promised land, with Joshua at the helm. In Joshua 10–11, we read a summary of the cities that were conquered as a part of this invasion. The people of Israel were proceeding to stake their claim in the promised land. They were not satisfied, however, to stop after conquering territory in central Canaan. The Lord had commanded them to take all the land. The people of Israel defeated the armies of a coalition of kings in southern Canaan (10:1-28). Next they fought and conquered Libnah, Lachish, Gezer, Eglon, Hebron, and Debir (see 10:29-39). Joshua 10:40-43 provides a summary statement of Israel’s conquest of southern Canaan. Joshua captured all these kings and their lands because the Lord fought for Israel (v. 42).

Joshua 11:1-15 describes Israel's defeat of a northern coalition of kings. When an enormous army led by northern kings marched against the Israelites, again Joshua did not hesitate to act under the Lord's direction. "Joshua and all the people of war with him came upon them suddenly . . . and attacked them" (v. 7).

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOSHUA 11:14-23.

In this portion of Joshua's story, it's easy for us to be distracted by all of the bloodshed and battle. Joshua 11:15 holds the key to this story, though. What is it that we are not to miss?

God calls us to a life of complete and total obedience, which is what Joshua modeled. What are some ways we obey God only partially? What are common excuses for doing so?

Could anything better be said about a follower of Christ than he or she left nothing undone of all that God had commanded? Joshua obeyed the Lord in every detail. Shouldn't others be able to say the same thing about our lives as Christians? Unfortunately, all too often we leave much undone because of laziness, procrastination, fear, or otherwise. Sometimes we work very hard but leave undone the things that matter most.

Verse 15 tells us that Joshua knew God's will for him because it had been clearly communicated through Moses. How do we know God's will for our lives today?

What would you say is God's will for your life?

We can turn to many places to try to determine God's will for us, such as the advice of other believers, extended time in prayer, or what we've learned from past experiences. But the bottom line is that we won't know God's will apart from His Word. Scripture tells us time and again that God's will is for us to glorify Him in everything we do.

Read Joshua 11:18 again. What does this verse tell us about Joshua's obedience to God?

Briefly share about a personal experience you've had of persevering in faith through difficult circumstances. How was your relationship with God impacted through that experience? What did you learn about faith?

Joshua not only gives us an example of total obedience but also perseverance. In 11:18 we read that he “waged war with all these kings for a long time.” Joshua 10 alone describes the repetition of Joshua’s military conquests—He did the same thing over and over again as he persevered in obeying God’s commands. This is what it’s like to follow Jesus. Whether we see immediate fruit in our lives or not, we are to abide in Him day after day. It’s through a lifetime of obedience that God transforms us in the image of Christ.

Now read verse 23 again. What was the result of Joshua’s total obedience to God? What is the application for us today?

In verse 23, we read that “the land had rest from war only after the commanded battles were fought and won. Joshua distributed the land to the people, and they experienced rest from fighting. Joshua remained faithful to the Lord’s commands until the land was conquered. Only when the task was completed did the people have rest from war. God wants us to obey Him fully, finishing the tasks He gives us.

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APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Do you need to make any changes to your routine or habits to make sure you can remain in Jesus?

At this time in your life, does obedience look more like the conquests or the chores? How is this affecting your relationship with God?

What is one area of your life where you are apt to struggle with obedience?

How can we encourage one another this week as we aim for a life of total obedience?

PRAY

As you close in prayer, give your group members the chance to spend a few minutes in silent, reflective prayer as they think about what needs to change for them to be able to obey God more completely.

COMMENTARY

JOSHUA 11:1-23

11:1. The role of Jabin king of Hazor as the leader of the towns of the northern region, corresponded to the king of Jerusalem (10:3) in the south. Situated north of the Sea of Galilee, Hazor was the largest ancient site in Israel. It was the dominant city of the entire land and governed trade to the north where it is mentioned in texts as far away as cities on the Euphrates River. The initial phrase “When Jabin... heard” duplicates those in 5:1 and 9:1 and signals that there will be a battle against Israel. Madon is unknown. It may be a variant of Merom, found in the “Waters of Merom” in verses 5 and 7.

Shimron (modern Tel Shimron) was located in the foothills near the western end of the Jezreel Valley. It lay at the southern end of Galilee. Achshaph (modern Tell Keisan) was situated to the west in the Acco plain. If Madon/Merom is identified as modern Tel Qarnei Hittin, it lay to the east near the Sea of Galilee. The effect is to identify important sites scattered across the populated areas around the Sea of Galilee to the north and westward along the Jezreel Valley and over to the Acco Plain and the Mediterranean Sea.

11:2 Chinnereth (modern Tel Kinrot) was a site on the northwest end of the Sea of Galilee. Chinnereth was also the name of the sea at that time, so the southern portion of

the area could include both the region around the sea and the Jordan Valley farther south. The Judean foothills translates “Shephelah,” a word meaning only “low hills.” Although the Bible often uses this term to describe the western foothills of Judah, here it probably refers to the foothills of Samaria, farther north and more in agreement with this description of lands and towns in the north. The Slopes of Dor is a translation of “Naphoth Dor,” an otherwise unknown name.

11:3 The Hivites were previously associated with Gibeon, but here they are found farther north at the foot of Mount Hermon. The Jebusites, often associated with Jerusalem, are more generally located in the hill country. Apparently these were people groups who populated more than one location. The reference to Mizpah anticipates the Valley of Mizpeh to the east in verse 8. The modern Mount Hermon lies at the southern tip of the Anti-Lebanon range. Mizpeh could refer to the southern end of the Beqa’a Valley where the Litani River flows south and then west to Tyre.

11:4 The huge number of the armies suggests a larger force than that of the southern coalition. As with Tyre (v. 1), these towns and cities tended to be more populous than those mentioned in chapter 10. The horses and chariots were the most sophisticated technology available in ancient warfare, used to move archers around the battlefield as a mobile firing platform.

11:5 Although there is a site known as Merom in upper Galilee, its location makes it unlikely as a strategic place for a battle. Modern Tel Qarni Hattin near the Horns of Hattin, a site famous for Crusader battles, seems more appropriate as the identification of Merom. It lay in the hills west of the Sea of Galilee and served as a dominating position for trade and armies coming south from Syria and for those coming east from the coast and the Jezreel Plain. The plan of these armies to attack Israel suggests that what follows would be a defensive war for Israel.

11:6 God promised to cause all of them to be killed before Israel. Again, He did the fighting and Israel reaped the benefits.

11:8 Great Sidon lay at the northwestern corner of Israel. Misrephoth-maim may have been at the northeastern end at the valley of the Litani River. Thus the attack began south of the Sea of Galilee and went westward and north to Sidon before turning

eastward to Misrephoth-maim, where it turned south along the Valley of Mizpah (v. 3). Twice the text records how Israel struck them down as if to emphasize the complete success of the mission.

11:9 Joshua and Israel obeyed God's commands from verse 6.

11:10 The size and strategic location of Hazor made it the most important city in Palestine throughout the second millennium b.c.

11:11-13 Today's ruins in Hazor do have a destruction layer from the thirteenth century b.c. This may be the one associated with Joshua (if one accepts a late date for the exodus). The temples of this period were destroyed and the images broken. The destruction layer attests to the burning of the city. No other city in Palestine among those mentioned as destroyed in chapters 1-11 has clear evidence of a burn layer like this during the time of Joshua. This attests to the fact that Israel did not burn any of the cities... except Hazor.

11:14 The treatment of these captured towns, in which Israel killed all the people but plundered all the spoils, resembles that of Ai (8:2,27). Unlike Jericho, at Ai God allowed His people to keep the plunder. Apparently this practice continued elsewhere in the land.

11:15 The battle accounts themselves dramatize the purpose of showing how Joshua and the Israel of his generation were obedient to God's commands. Their faithfulness resulted in God's gift of the land.

11:16 The summary of Israel's battles and victories begins with the regions. Those in the south are followed by those in the north. The land of Goshen may refer to the region with the town of that name in 10:41, in Judah (15:51). Perhaps it is a variant for the kingdom of Geshur, north of the Sea of Galilee.

11:17 The summary turns to the boundaries of the newly acquired land. Mount Halak (modern Jebel Halaq) lay midway between Kadesh-barnea and the southern tip of the Dead Sea. It thus defined the southern border with Seir (Edom). The precise location of Baal-gad... at the foot of Mount Hermon is unknown. The Valley of Lebanon may refer to the Valley of Mizpah, or to both it and the Beqa'a—the entire region between the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon mountain ranges.

11:20 Exodus 4-14 repeats how God would harden the heart of Pharaoh. Here God treated the kings and warriors of Canaan in a similar manner. Thus the reason for the destruction as given here did not lie in other sins of Canaan or in their origins, but in their refusal to recognize Israel's God or to allow Israel access to the land.

11:21 The Anakim represent legendary warriors (Dt 2:10-11). By the time of Joshua they had lived for hundreds of years in Palestine, as attested in Egyptian sources. The three Anakim in Jos 14:15 may correspond to the three towns mentioned here, perhaps as rulers. Anab may refer to the site of 'Unnab ets-Tseghur about 15 miles southwest of Hebron. With Debir, these are all located in southern Palestine. When Joshua completely destroyed the three cities, he may have been represented by Caleb (15:14-15).

11:22 The remnants of the Anakim in Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod anticipate the arrival of the Philistines and the presence of a giant such as Goliath (1Sam 17:4).

11:23 The inheritance that Joshua presented to Israel uses a word that occurs in Joshua for the first time, but it will occur dozens of times in the remainder of the book. It serves as a transition from the battles to the division of the inheritance.

READING ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

Joshua 12:1-24; Joshua 13:1-33; Joshua 14:1-15