



A MODEL OF OBEDIENCE • REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE •

JOSHUA 5:1-12 • 02/25/2018

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## MAIN POINT

While what we do for the Lord is important, who we are before the Lord is more important.

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## INTRODUCTION

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

**Do you have any favorite traditions in your family that surround a particular day?**

**What's the value in continuing to do something like what you described year after year?**

**When you talk about this tradition with others, is it hard or difficult for them to understand why it's important? Why do you think that is?**

We all have traditions, big or small, in our families or close relationships. These are more than just activities to be performed like rituals; they help us remember significant moments of the past and as they do help us remember who we truly are. Throughout the Bible, God tells His people over and over again to remember various things. When we take time to remember, we are reminded that although what we do for the Lord is important, who we are before the Lord is more important.

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## UNDERSTANDING

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

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ JOSHUA 5:1-12.

**Scan back through the first four chapters of Joshua. How had the Lord demonstrated His power on behalf of the people as they got ready to go into the land?**

**Given that, what do you think the people of the land thought of the Israelites?**

**Does it surprise you that the Israelite army took a break from their forward advance instead of attacking immediately? Was this a “wise” battle plan?**

The Israelites number at least two million, and the people of the land had heard how God had dried up the Jordan River even during the flood stage. It's no wonder they were terrified of this army that was coming. Conventional wisdom would say that the army should strike while the iron was hot; by taking a break from the advance, the army allowed the people of the land to further fortify their position. What's more, the circumcision of the army put them out of commission for a while, weakening their strength until they recovered.

**What do God's commands in Joshua 5 that defy worldly wisdom show you about what's important to Him? Can you think of other examples of God's commands to His people that would be seen as foolish in the eyes of the world?**

The kingdom of God flips the values and principles of the kingdom of the world on their heads. In God's kingdom, the way up is going down; the way to lead is to serve; the way to true life is death. And the way to conquer is not through clever battle tactics, but through pausing to remember who God is and who He has made us to be in Him.

**What were the Israelites in Joshua 5 doing by being circumcised?**

**What about observing the Passover? Why would observing the Passover be an important thing for the Israelites to do at this time?**

Circumcision was a mark of God's covenant; it was a physical reminder of who these people were. The yearly observance of the Passover meal was a chance for God's people to call to mind His great acts of deliverance when He brought them out of slavery in Egypt. God provided these tangible means so that His people, who had and still have the tendency to forget, would regularly remember who He is and what He has done in making them His people.

**What are some of the things God has given His people today that serve a similar purpose? To remind us of who He is and who we are in Him?**

**Why do you think we have the tendency to forget these things?**

**Is it possible that we can get so busy doing things for God that we actually forget about God or who we are in Him? Has that ever happened to you?**

**How do you think the people of Israel emerged from this time of remembrance? Do you think it changed their perspective on the challenges ahead? How so?**

Today when we do things together as the body of Christ like celebrate someone's baptism or take the Lord's Supper together, it's an opportunity for us to pause and

remind ourselves of who we are in Christ. Just as God delivered His people from bondage and brought them into a new land, He has delivered us from the bondage of sin and death and brought us into the new life in Christ. In a culture that is bombarding us with messages about who we should be and what we should pursue, we would do well to remind ourselves that God has claimed and marked us as His own through the Holy Spirit that lives inside of us.

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## APPLICATION

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

**How has this discussion changed the way you should view things like celebrating baptism and the Lord's Supper?**

**If you have been marked as God's possession by the Holy Spirit, how should that impact the way you make decisions as you move forward this week?**

**Is there anything you're doing for God that you need to pause for a moment in order to be strengthened by remembering what He's done in the past?**

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## PRAY

Thank God for His faithfulness in the past. Ask Him to make you mindful of your tendency to forget who He is and what He has done, and ask Him to help you live out who He has made you to be in Christ.

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# COMMENTARY

## JOSHUA 5:1-12

5:1. The Amorite kings dominated the hill country whereas the Canaanite kings lived near the Mediterranean Sea. The message that these kings heard concerns how the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan, and it links 4:24 and the statement there. While the effect in chapter 4 was to increase faith, here it had the opposite effect on the enemies. The key word, crossed over, again occurs (1:2). That they lost heart is literally “their heart melted.” This repeats Rahab’s description of the Canaanites upon hearing of Israel’s victory over Egypt (2:9-11, which also includes the same verb for drying up the Red Sea).

5:2. The command to circumcise implies that this generation had not been circumcised (vv. 4-7) and revives again this act of covenant making that God began with Abraham (Gen 17). Thus Israel would once again become children of Abraham and heirs of the promised land.

5:3. Gibeath-haaraloth means “the hill of foreskins,” an unknown site.

5:4-9. Words and phrases are repeated and interwoven to explain the necessity of this act. A contrast is made repeating the verb “to end, to finish” in verses 6 and 8. Thus the previous generation died off (v. 6) while the present generation “finished” being circumcised.

5:5. The generation coming from Egypt had been united in their circumcision. Egyptians also circumcised their males, but as Genesis 17 suggests, the Israelite practice precedes their time in Egypt.

5:9. The wordplay on Gilgal, which means “circle” as a noun and “roll” as a verb, refers to rolling away the disgrace of Egypt. This was the rebellion of the previous generation of Israel that caused them to die in the desert. Because this current generation had followed the covenant and had been circumcised, they could now enter the promised land and leave behind forever the disgrace of their parents.

5:10. Israel was explicitly commanded to celebrate the Passover when the people arrived in the promised land (Ex 13:5). Israel thereby inherited the covenantal promises and blessings that the earlier generation had received when it left Egypt.

5:11. The days of unleavened bread follow the Passover (Ex 12:17,20; 23:15; 34:18). The basic food of Canaan was barley that ripened at this time. Manna had been all that the present generation of Israel knew. Now they would begin to eat from the food of the new land. Israel enjoyed the fruits of the land where they had arrived as a token of the greater abundance they were to enjoy when the entire land was taken.

5:12. The cessation of the manna signaled a new phase in Israel's history. The people were no longer in the wilderness but in their homeland. They began a new life in keeping with the celebration of God's historic acts of redemption. Today this occurs with the new life in Jesus Christ whose death and resurrection bring it about.

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## READING ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

Joshua 6:1-27