

For Adults Ages 18 and Up

Adult Bible Class



Fall Quarter
September | October
November 2023

Adult Bible Class

FALL QUARTER

September, October, November 2023

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Success and Failure

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Is This Success?

TODD WILLIAMS

A respected research organization once crunched the data for weather forecasts in 713 locations across the U.S. One weather service was found to have been the best at predicting rain only seven percent of the time! This particular organization, which touts itself as being especially accurate, must be considered successful on some level since it is one of the most well-known forecasting services in the United States. But one would likely be more successful at rain predictions by simply flipping a coin!

Success can be measured in different ways in the earthly realm; but on a spiritual level, success is rightly measured solely by God's standards (see Matthew 16:26). The Scriptures teach that it is impossible to be truly successful without trusting and obeying God.

This quarter of lessons provides a wealth of straightforward illustrations showing the extreme contrast between the success of sincere faith in God (unit 1) and the failure that results from going it alone (unit 2). The third unit of study reaffirms those results with various Scripture passages that offer warnings and exhortations about what leads to failure and what results in true success.

We begin our spiritual journey this quarter by focusing on the Lord's challenge to Joshua, the one who would lead Israel to conquer Canaan. Although many dangers and trials lay ahead, the Lord commanded Joshua to have courage, because He had al-

ready given Israel the land. If they were faithful to God, no army would be able to stand against them. Joshua proved this word true, conquering even the many giants who opposed them. In fact, the Lord had already gone before them to ensure their success. This reality was revealed by Rahab to the men Joshua sent to spy out Jericho (lesson 2). Rahab had been divinely prepared to protect the spies and provide them with the vital information that the Canaanites were in a panic because of Israel. Both the spies, therefore, confirmed to Joshua that the Lord was giving them the land.

Israel faced Jericho after they crossed the Jordan, and it seemed especially impregnable (lesson 3). The preparations to fight against it may have even seemed to lower the possibility of conquering the city: Joshua had them simply march around the city for seven days. But their God-directed actions resulted in Jericho becoming a sort of firstfruits to the Lord, as they successfully began the conquest of the Promised Land by faith.

Lesson 4 tells of another victory a couple generations after Joshua. King Eglon of Moab had cruelly oppressed God's people for eighteen years. Interestingly, he established a stronghold at the formerly conquered city of Jericho ("city of palm trees" in Judges 3:13). By a stalwart faith in God, Ehud assassinated Eglon and successfully led Israel to destroy Moab's control.

Through faith, Gideon secured an

even more amazing victory. The oppressive Midianites came in an innumerable swarm. But our fifth lesson shows how the Lord carefully and gently developed in Gideon the faith to believe that with only three hundred men he could defeat this powerful enemy.

Our focus changes to examples of disloyalty and faithlessness with lesson 6, which begins unit 2. We first look at how one man's sin affected the whole nation. Achan disobeyed God's command to not take plunder from Jericho. As a result, the Lord handed Israel a terrible defeat at the hands of the tiny town of Ai.

Lesson 7 gives a general overview of the backsliding ways of Israel during the time of the judges. God's people persistently pursued the worship of false pagan gods of other nations. Despite such insulting behavior, God repeatedly sent judges to draw them back to Himself.

The Lord was truly Israel's King, and He ruled the nation fairly and faithfully. But the people rebelled against His rule and demanded a human king. Lesson 8 deals with the process God used in granting their misguided demand.

Our third unit revisits the time of Joshua and his final exhortation to the people of God (lesson 9). He forcefully emphasized the importance of trusting and obeying the Lord. When the people stated their commitment to this, Joshua challenged their sincerity. Clearly, he was right to do so, since their history reveals the fickle nature of their devotion to God. Lesson 10 contains an intense exchange between the Lord and His people. When they cried to Him for relief from oppression, He rebuked them by telling them to seek help from the other gods they had chosen. Thankfully, they sincerely repented and God graciously rescued them.



King David's brazen sin with Bath-sheba (lesson 11) is a sobering warning: even the most faithful servants of God are susceptible to temptation. His moral failure led to tragic consequences for him, his family, and the entire nation.

Israel's rebellion against their God brought stern rebukes from the prophets. Amos revealed God's disgust with Israel's hypocritical worship (lesson 12). He warned that, contrary to their expectations, judgment would fall not merely on the wicked nations around them but upon them as well. We see the tragic reality of this in our final lesson. Israel's stubborn insolence resulted in severe judgment: God used the Babylonians to destroy the nation and carry off the few survivors into exile. When mockingly asked to sing songs about their homeland that God had blessed so abundantly and for so long, their hearts were too broken to comply.

May the Lord use the compelling reminders in the lessons this quarter to help us avoid the same kinds of failures and pursue true success instead. Let us not forget that God always works to develop our faith and deeply desires us to succeed.

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT

JOSH. 1:1 Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD it came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying,

2 Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, *even* to the children of Israel.

3 Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.

4 From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast.

5 There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

6 Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swear unto their fathers to give them.

11:16 So Joshua took all that land, the hills, and all the south country, and all the land of Goshen, and the valley, and the plain, and the

mountain of Israel, and the valley of the same;

17 *Even* from the mount Halak, that goeth up to Seir, even unto Baal-gad in the valley of Lebanon under mount Hermon: and all their kings he took, and smote them, and slew them.

18 Joshua made war a long time with all those kings.

19 There was not a city that made peace with the children of Israel, save the Hivites the inhabitants of Gibeon: all *other* they took in battle.

21 And at that time came Joshua, and cut off the Anakims from the mountains, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, and from all the mountains of Judah, and from all the mountains of Israel: Joshua destroyed them utterly with their cities.

22 There was none of the Anakims left in the land of the children of Israel: only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod, there remained.

23 So Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the LORD said unto Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance unto Israel according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land rested from war.

NOTES

Be Strong and Courageous

Lesson Text: Joshua 1:1-6; 11:16-19, 21-23

Related Scriptures: Numbers 27:15-23;
Deuteronomy 11:22-25; 31:7-15, 22-23; 34:5-9; Joshua 22:1-9

TIME: 1405 B.C.

PLACES: Shittim; Canaan

GOLDEN TEXT—“Joshua took the whole land, according to all that the Lord said unto Moses” (Joshua 11:23).

Lesson Exposition

THE PROMISE OF THE LAND— Josh. 1:1-6

A command (Josh. 1:1-2). Moses was dead. A new era was beginning in the history of Israel. The people were camped on the east side of the Jordan River, having been led there by Moses in their journey toward the land of Canaan. Moses had been told he would not be allowed to lead them into the land (Num. 20:12); so it was time for a new leader. Moses was known as “the servant of the Lord” (Josh. 1:1), a title that is repeatedly used for him throughout this book. Joshua 24:29 shows that the title was also used for Joshua by the time of his death.

Since Joshua had previously been appointed as Moses’ successor (Num. 27:15-23; Deut. 31:14-23), he no doubt took the leadership role immediately after Moses’ death. He had served as Moses’ assistant for many years; so he had been well groomed for the position. Nevertheless, a change of leadership always carries certain uncertainties and adjustments. It was important

for Joshua to have God reaffirm to him what he was to do. God, who always knows when we need that kind of encouragement, came to Joshua with an important message.

We cannot tell exactly how God gave Joshua this message, but when it came, it was clear. The death of the previous leader did not thwart God’s plan for His people. Now it was time for the new leader to move ahead with it. Joshua was to lead the people across the Jordan River into the land God was going to give them. This was the land He had promised Abraham (Gen. 12:7). It had been a long time since the promise had been given, but no matter how long it takes, God never goes back on His word to His people.

A promise (Josh. 1:3-4). What an all-inclusive, powerful word this was! Wherever Joshua would lead God’s people, God would give them that land. We know that much more than simply walking the territory was going to be involved. Times of war and struggle lay ahead for them, but God promised vic-