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THE 66-BOOK 8-WEEK GROUP BIBLE STUDY SERIES • BOOK 06 OF 66

יְהוֹשֻׁעַ

JOSHUA

Yehoshua — “the LORD saves” • An 8-Week Group Bible Study

By Greg and Kayla Gibson

WEEK 1 OF 8 • GENERAL / MIXED GROUP EDITION

Be Strong and Courageous — Joshua 1:1–3:17

Scripture Scope: Joshua 1:1–3:17 (ESV) • Session Length: 75–90 Minutes

LEADER GUIDE EDITION

Complete Participant Text + Interleaved Pacing, Hebrew Word Studies, Facilitation Probes & Pitfalls

Joshua — 8-Week Group Bible Study (Leader Guide Edition)

Week 1: Be Strong and Courageous (Joshua 1:1–3:17)

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- **The title:** The book is named for its main human character. His Hebrew name, Yehoshua (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ), means "the LORD saves." Moses gave it to him, changing it from Hoshea (Numbers 13:16). In Greek the name is Iēsous, the same name the angel gives to Mary's son (Matthew 1:21).
- **The setting:** The book opens "after the death of Moses" (1:1), with Israel camped east of the Jordan on the plains of Moab, exactly where Deuteronomy ended. It closes with Joshua's death and burial in the land (24:29–30).
- **Its place in the Bible:** In English Bibles, Joshua begins the historical books. In the Hebrew Bible it opens the Former Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings), the story of Israel in the land from entry to exile.
- **The structure (four parts):**
  - Entering the land (1–5): the commission, Rahab, the Jordan crossing, and the camp at Gilgal.
  - Taking the land (6–12): Jericho, Achan and Ai, Gibeon, and the southern and northern campaigns.
  - Dividing the land (13–21): the tribal inheritances, the cities of refuge, and the Levites' towns.
  - Keeping faith in the land (22–24): the altar of witness, Joshua's farewell, and the covenant at Shechem.
- **The big themes:** God's presence ("I will be with you," 1:5); courage rooted in God's word (1:7–9); the land as a gift and an inheritance; holiness and judgment; grace to outsiders such as Rahab and the Gibeonites; promises kept ("Not one word... had failed," 21:45); and the call to choose whom to serve (24:15).
- **Why it matters:** Joshua shows God keeping the promise of land he made to Abraham (Genesis 12:7; 15:18–21). It also leaves readers waiting for a greater rest than Joshua could give (Hebrews 4:8–10), a rest found in the one who bears Joshua's name.

How This 8-Week Study Works

Designed for weekly small groups, mini-churches, and community gatherings (75–90 Minutes per session) rather than daily homework checklists, each week of Joshua invites you to slow down and walk with Israel into the land together through six repeatable sections:

- **Section X.1 — Opening:** Sets the scene, the Week at a Glance, Head, Heart, and Hands objectives, the Opening Frame, and the Opening Entry Question.
- **Section X.2 — Historical & Literary Context:** Places the week's chapters inside the structure of Joshua and the ancient Near Eastern world.
- **Section X.3 — Movement 1:** The week's first guided passage: Guided Scripture Reading, Anchor Verses, Teaching Narrative, and Group Discussion Questions.
- **Section X.4 — Movement 2:** The week's second guided passage, following the same flow.
- **Section X.5 — Canonical Horizon:** Traces how the passage echoes across Scripture and finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.
- **Section X.6 — Application, Looking Ahead, and Closing Prayer:** Moves the week's study into everyday life, previews next week, and closes in prayer.

Key anchor verses are printed in each section for quick reference. Longer focal passages are read aloud together from the ESV. Where Joshua gives long lists of kings, boundaries, and towns (especially in Weeks 5–7), the study summarizes them in words so the group can follow the story without reading every name aloud.

Choosing a Bible Translation: Top 5 Translations Compared

Every English Bible translation falls along a spectrum between two primary approaches: word-for-word translation (formal equivalence, which prioritizes literal accuracy to the original phrasing and sentence structure) and thought-for-thought translation (dynamic equivalence, which prioritizes immediate modern readability by translating idioms and ideas into natural contemporary expressions). Here is how five widely used English translations compare:

- **ESV (English Standard Version) — Word-for-Word**
  - Pros: Follows the wording and sentence structure of the original Hebrew and Greek closely while using modern English; well suited to close study.
  - Cons: Because it tracks the original sentence structure, some phrasing can feel more formal than everyday speech.
- **NIV (New International Version) — Balanced (Between Word-for-Word and Thought-for-Thought)**
  - Pros: Widely read; balances accuracy to the original languages with natural, everyday readability.
  - Cons: Because some idioms are rendered as modern expressions, a few literal wordplays or technical terms can be less visible.
- **NLT (New Living Translation) — Thought-for-Thought**
  - Pros: Warm and conversational; reads smoothly aloud and helps readers follow the big picture of long passages.
  - Cons: Because it prioritizes meaning over literal phrasing, it can be harder to use for close word study.
- **CSB (Christian Standard Bible) — Optimal Equivalence (Balanced)**
  - Pros: Stays close to the original words where possible while smoothing awkward phrasing into natural modern English.
  - Cons: Because it is a newer translation, some well-known verses may sound different from the wording many readers remember.
- **KJV / NKJV (King James Version & New King James Version) — Traditional Word-for-Word**
  - Pros: Historic cadence that shaped English literature and church history; the NKJV updates archaic pronouns ("thee/thou") while keeping the classic rhythm.
  - Cons: Often reads like older English poetry, with complex sentences and archaic or formal vocabulary that can be harder for modern readers to follow.

This study quotes the ESV.

Greg & Kayla's Recommended Study Bibles

Having a trusted study Bible on hand is one of the best ways to go deeper as you read through Joshua:

- **Greg's Favorite Study Bible:** The MacArthur Study Bible (ESV), which contains extensive explanatory notes beneath almost every verse, ideal for detailed study.
- **Kayla's Favorite Study Bible:** The ESV Study Bible, containing over 20,000 study notes, articles, and explanations.

The 8-Week Joshua Study at a Glance

Week	Title & Passage	Movement 1 / Movement 2	Canonical Horizon
1	**Be Strong and Courageous** (1:1–3:17)	The Commission and the Scarlet Cord (1:1–2:24) / Crossing the Jordan (3:1–17)	The greater Joshua; Rahab's faith; the God who will not leave
2	**Stones of Remembrance, Walls of Jericho** (4:1–6:27)	Memorial, Circumcision, and the Commander (4:1–5:15) / The Walls Fall (6:1–27)	Remembering God's acts; the heart circumcised in Christ; faith that brought the walls down
3	**Trouble in the Camp** (7:1–8:35)	Achan and the Valley of Achor (7:1–26) / Ai Taken and the Covenant at Ebal (8:1–35)	Holiness among God's people; a door of hope; Christ who bore the curse
4	**Deception and Deliverance** (9:1–10:43)	The Gibeonite Treaty (9:1–27) / The Day the LORD Fought for Israel (10:1–43)	Outsiders brought near; keeping our word; the LORD who fights for his people
5	**The Land Taken, the Land Remaining** (11:1–13:33)	Hazor and the Kings Defeated (11:1–12:24) / Much Land Remains (13:1–33)	Already and not yet; the LORD as inheritance
6	**Inheritance by Lot** (14:1–17:18)	Caleb and the Portion of Judah (14:1–15:63) / Joseph's Portion and the Daughters of Zelophehad (16:1–17:18)	Our inheritance in Christ
7	**Not One Word Failed** (18:1–21:45)	Shiloh and the Seven Remaining Tribes (18:1–19:51) / Refuge, Levites, and Rest (20:1–21:45)	Christ our refuge; every promise kept; the rest still to come
8	**Choose This Day** (22:1–24:33)	The Altar of Witness (22:1–34) / Joshua's Farewell and the Covenant at Shechem (23:1–24:33)	One Lord and one people; choosing whom we serve; the rest Joshua could not give

FOR LEADERS

WEEK 1 SESSION GUIDE · JOSHUA 1:1–3:17

How to Use This Leader Guide Edition

- **Two synced editions:** The Leader Guide contains every word of the Participant Study Edition, with leader-only overlays after each section. Section numbers and question labels match exactly, so leaders and participants can stay on the same page.
- **Session length:** Each session runs 75–90 Minutes. Pacing targets appear in every Leader section header. If time runs short, shorten the Teaching Narratives rather than the discussion.
- **What each overlay contains:** Pacing & Time Target, Facilitation Cues & Follow-Up Probes (probes listed in question order), Pitfalls to Steer Around, and Additional Research Notes. Hebrew Word Study and Ancient Near Eastern Research Notes appear when they add something useful.
- **Leader Flags:** Numbered in reading order, they mark passages that need pastoral care or tend to raise hard questions, with guidance on handling them. Joshua contains several hard passages about war and the "devoted to destruction" commands; the flags give a consistent, honest approach week by week.

- **Reading aloud:** Assign readers ahead of time for the Guided Scripture Reading. Printed anchor verses are for quick reference; read the longer focal passages from an open ESV. Long lists of kings, boundaries, and towns are summarized in words by the leader rather than read in full.
- **Facilitating well:** Ask the printed question, wait, and let silence work. Use the probes to deepen, not to lecture. Aim for every voice to be heard at least once each session.

Week 1 Session Pacing at a Glance (75–90 Minutes)

Section	Focus	Time Target
Section 1.1	Opening: Be Strong and Courageous (Joshua 1:1–3:17) (1.1 Q1)	**10 mins**
Section 1.2	Historical & Literary Context: After the Death of Moses (1.2 Q1–Q3)	**12 mins**
Section 1.3	Movement 1: The Commission and the Scarlet Cord (Joshua 1:1–2:24) (1.3 Q1–Q5)	**22 mins**
Section 1.4	Movement 2: Crossing the Jordan (Joshua 3:1–17) (1.4 Q1–Q5)	**20 mins**
Section 1.5	Canonical Horizon: The Greater Joshua, Rahab's Faith, and the God Who Will Not Leave (1.5 Q1–Q3)	**12 mins**
Section 1.6	Application, Looking Ahead, and Closing Prayer (1.6 Q1–Q3)	**9 mins**
Total	**Full Week 1 Group Session**	**75–90 Minutes**

WEEK 1 OF 8

WEEK 1 SESSION GUIDE · JOSHUA 1:1–3:17

Week 1: Be Strong and Courageous

Scripture Scope: Joshua 1:1–3:17 (ESV) • Focal Passages: Joshua 1:1–9; 2:8–14; 3:9–17 • Session Length: 75–90 Minutes

Section 1.1

Opening: Be Strong and Courageous (Joshua 1:1–3:17)

Passage Joshua 1:1–3:17

Opening

Moses is dead. For forty years he led Israel through the wilderness, and now he lies buried on the far side of the Jordan. The people are camped on the plains of Moab, and the river, swollen with spring floods, stands between them and the land God promised to Abraham. The LORD speaks to Joshua, Moses' assistant, and gives him a command and a promise: be strong and courageous, for I will be with you.

Over these first three chapters, Joshua takes up the leadership, two spies meet an unlikely woman of faith in Jericho, and the whole nation steps into the Jordan behind the ark of the covenant.

Week 1 At a Glance

Scripture Scope	Joshua 1:1–3:17 (the commission, Rahab, and the crossing of the Jordan)
Focal Passages	Joshua 1:1–9; 2:8–14; 3:9–17
Literary & Structural Anchor	Chapter 1 is built on the repeated charge chazaq ve'emats (חֲזַק וֶאֱמָץ), "be strong and courageous" (1:6, 7, 9, and from the people in 1:18). The phrase frames the whole chapter and ties Joshua's courage to God's presence and God's word. Chapters 1–3 then move toward one great act of 'avar (עָבַר), "passing over": the word appears again and again in chapter 3 as the people cross the Jordan, so the week's story moves from the command to cross (1:2) to the crossing completed (3:17).
Big Idea	The LORD who was with Moses is with Joshua; his people can step forward in courage because God is present, his word is sure, and his mercy reaches even an outsider like Rahab.

Week 1 Learning Objectives (Head, Heart, Hands)

HEAD **Know the Story of the Handoff:** Understand how Joshua continues Deuteronomy, what God's commission to Joshua includes, and how the Jordan crossing echoes the Red Sea.

HEART **Trust the God Who Goes Before:** Receive the promise "I will not leave you or forsake you" (1:5) as a source of courage, not a demand to feel brave.

HANDS **Step Forward on God's Word:** Identify one step of obedience that requires courage this week and take it, trusting God's presence.

Opening Frame: After the Death of Moses

Deuteronomy ended on Mount Nebo. Moses looked across the Jordan at the land he would not enter, died there, and was buried by God, and Scripture noted that no prophet like him had arisen since (Deuteronomy 34). Joshua begins in the very next moment: "After the death of Moses." The great leader is gone, the river is in flood, and the promise is still unfulfilled. What happens to God's people when the one they relied on is no longer there? Joshua's answer begins not with Joshua's ability but with God's presence: "Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you" (1:5). The question for this week: where does real courage come from when we step into something new? Before we read together, take a moment to share with the group:

Opening Entry Question (Icebreaker)

1.1 Q1 (Opening Entry Question): Think of a time you stepped into a role, a job, or a responsibility after someone you respected. What helped you take that first step?

◆ LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY — SECTION 1.1 · SECTION PACING TARGET: 10 MINUTES

- **Pacing & Time Target:** 10 minutes. Opening and At a Glance, 3 minutes; Head, Heart, Hands, 2 minutes; Opening Frame, 2 minutes; Opening Entry Question, 3 minutes.
- **Facilitation Cues & Follow-Up Probes:**
  - Welcome the group to book six. If the group studied Deuteronomy together, remind them briefly of Moses on Mount Nebo. Describe the setting in words: Israel camped east of the Jordan, opposite Jericho, with the river in flood between them and the land. Keep the icebreaker light; take three or four answers.
  - Follow-up probe for **1.1 Q1**: What was hardest about following someone you respected? Did anyone say something to you that steadied you? How did you know you were ready, or did you go before you felt ready?
- **Pitfalls to Steer Around:** Do not launch into the dating debate or the conquest questions here; 1.2 and the Leader Flags handle them. Keep the icebreaker from becoming a long personal history.
- **Additional Research Notes:** Joshua 1:1 picks up from Deuteronomy 34 without a gap. Moses had already commissioned Joshua publicly (Deuteronomy 31:7–8, 23), using the same words, "be strong and courageous" and "he will not leave you or forsake you." Joshua was Moses' assistant from his youth (Numbers 11:28), led Israel in battle against Amalek (Exodus 17:8–13), and was one of the two faithful spies (Numbers 14:6–9, 30).
- **Hebrew Word Study:** Chazaq ve'emats (חֲזַק וֶאֱמָץ), "be strong and courageous," in 1:6, 7, 9, and 18. Chazaq (חָזַק) means to be firm or hold fast; 'amats (אָמַץ) means to be bold or alert. In this opening the pair sets the week's theme, and the leader can point out that the command is always joined to a reason outside Joshua: God's promise (1:6), God's word (1:7–8), and God's presence (1:9).

Section 1.2

Historical & Literary Context: After the Death of Moses (Joshua 1:1–3:17)

Passage Joshua 1:1–3:17

Entering the World of the Jordan Crossing

1. Historical Background

Israel is on the plains of Moab at the end of the forty years in the wilderness. Joshua son of Nun, of the tribe of Ephraim, has been Moses' assistant and was commissioned as his successor (Numbers 27:18–23; Deuteronomy 31). The book does not name its author. Jewish tradition (Talmud, Bava Batra 14b–15a) credits Joshua with most of it, with later additions such as the account of his death. Phrases such as "to this day" (for example 4:9; 5:9) show that the book was completed some time after the events.

2. Dating the Events

There are two main views. An early date places the entry into Canaan around 1406 BC, based on the 480 years of 1 Kings 6:1. A later date places it in the thirteenth century BC. The Merneptah Stele (about 1208 BC) is the earliest text outside the Bible to name a people called Israel living in Canaan.

3. Cultural Setting

In the fourteenth century BC the Amarna Letters show Canaan as a patchwork of small city-states, each with its own king, loosely under Egyptian control, and troubled by unsettled groups called the 'Apiru. Jericho (Tell es-Sultan) is one of the oldest known cities, set near springs in the Jordan Valley.

4. Literary Structure of Joshua 1:1–3:17

- **God's commission to Joshua** (1:1–9)
- **Joshua's orders to the officers and to the eastern tribes** (1:10–18)
- **The spies and Rahab** (2:1–24)
- **Preparation and crossing** (3:1–17), continued into chapter 4

5. Key Themes

God's presence; courage tied to the Book of the Law; unity of all twelve tribes, including those already settled east of the Jordan; an outsider who confesses the LORD; and the crossing as a new exodus.

6. Theological Considerations

The book presents the land as the LORD's gift, promised to Abraham, and the conquest as God's judgment on Canaan's long wickedness (Genesis 15:16). It also shows from the start that the line between "inside" and "outside" God's people is crossed by faith, as Rahab shows.

7. Relevant Scholarly Insights

Many critical scholars read Joshua as part of a larger history from Deuteronomy through Kings, shaped in the time of the kings or the exile. Evangelical scholars generally see the book as rooted in early sources close to the events, with later editorial notes. Both views take the book's close ties to Deuteronomy seriously.

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.2)

1.2 Q1: Joshua begins "after the death of Moses," exactly where Deuteronomy ended. Why might it matter that God's story does not stop when a great leader dies?

1.2 Q2: Joshua tells the eastern tribes, who already have their land, to cross and fight alongside the others (1:12–15). What does this say about how God's people are meant to share one another's burdens?

1.2 Q3: The land is described as a gift God promised long before (1:2–6). How does seeing something as a gift, rather than an achievement, change the way you receive it?

◆ LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY — SECTION 1.2 · SECTION PACING TARGET: 12 MINUTES

- **Pacing & Time Target:** 12 minutes. Context summary, 5 minutes; discussion, 7 minutes (about 2 minutes per question).
- **Facilitation Cues & Follow-Up Probes:**
  - Present the four-part outline (entering, taking, dividing, keeping faith) on a whiteboard; it will be used every week. Mention the two dating views in a sentence each and move on. Name the hard questions about the conquest honestly and tell the group that each week will take them up carefully in context.
  - Follow-up probe for **1.2 Q1**: What do people tend to fear when a trusted leader is gone? What stays the same when leaders change? How have you seen God's work continue after a loss in your church or family?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.2 Q2**: What would it have cost those tribes to leave their families and cross the river? What promise had they made (Numbers 32)? Where is God asking you to stand with someone whose need is not your own?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.2 Q3**: What is the difference between receiving and earning? How does the word "inheritance" shape this? Where in your life is it easy to forget something was given?
- **Pitfalls to Steer Around:** Do not let the dating debate take over; the book's message does not depend on settling it. Do not suggest that archaeology "proves" or "disproves" Joshua; the evidence is partial and debated. Avoid turning the conquest into a modern political discussion.
- **Additional Research Notes:** Deuteronomy 31:7–8 and 31:23 are the source of 1:5–9. Numbers 32 records the eastern tribes' promise that 1:12–18 recalls. Genesis 15:13–21 sets the land promise and the timing ("the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete"). Hebrews 4:8 and Acts 7:45 mention Joshua by name.
- **Ancient Near Eastern Research Notes:** The Amarna Letters, written by Canaanite kings to the pharaoh, complain of the 'Apiru, a term for unsettled people on the edge of society. Some once linked the word to "Hebrew," but most scholars now see the 'Apiru as a broad social group, not the same as Israel. The letters do show a divided Canaan of small city-states, which fits the many kings named in Joshua. Royal grants of

land and treaties often began with the grantor's name and authority, much as 1:2–6 begins with what the LORD gives.

- **Hebrew Word Study:**
  - Yehoshua (יְהוֹשֻׁעַ), "the LORD saves," the name of the book's main character (1:1). In this context section it ties the whole book to its theme: the salvation of God's people is the LORD's work through his servant. The Greek form, Iēsous, links Joshua directly to Jesus (Matthew 1:21), which 1.5 develops.
  - 'Eved YHWH (עֶבֶד יְהוָה), "the servant of the LORD," used of Moses in 1:1 and of Joshua at his death (24:29). In this section it frames the book: Joshua begins as "Moses' assistant" and ends with Moses' title, a sign that he finished his course faithfully.

Section 1.3

Movement 1: The Commission and the Scarlet Cord (Joshua 1:1–2:24)

Passage Joshua 1:1–2:24

Guided Scripture Reading

Open your Bible to **Joshua 1**. Read aloud in this order, with brief connecting summaries from the leader between readings:

- **Reader 1: Joshua 1:1–9** (focal passage) — The LORD commissions Joshua: cross the Jordan, every place your foot treads, I will be with you, be strong and courageous, meditate on the Book of the Law.
- **Leader summary of Joshua 1:10–18** — Joshua orders the people to prepare provisions; the eastern tribes promise to cross with their brothers and answer Joshua with their own "be strong and courageous."
- **Reader 2: Joshua 2:1–7** — Two spies go to Jericho and lodge at the house of Rahab; she hides them on the roof under stalks of flax and sends the king's men away.
- **Reader 3: Joshua 2:8–14** (focal passage) — Rahab's confession of the LORD and her request for kindness; the spies' oath.
- **Leader summary of Joshua 2:15–24** — Rahab lets them down by a rope; the scarlet cord is the sign; the spies hide three days and report, "Truly the LORD has given all the land into our hands."

Anchor Verses (ESV)

> **Joshua 1:5:** No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.
>
> **Joshua 1:7–9:** Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."
>
> **Joshua 2:9–11:** and said to the men, "I know that the LORD has given you the land, and that the fear of you has fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land melt away before you. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan, to Sihon and Og, whom you devoted to destruction. And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the LORD your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.
>
> **Joshua 2:18:** Behold, when we come into the land, you shall tie this scarlet cord in the window through which you let us down, and you shall gather into your house your father and mother, your brothers, and all your father's household.

Teaching Narrative: Courage, a Confession, and a Cord

1. "Moses My Servant Is Dead" (Joshua 1:1–2)

God names the loss plainly and then gives a command: arise, go over this Jordan. Grief does not cancel God's purpose; the promise passes to a new generation.

2. The Promise of Presence (Joshua 1:3–6)

Every place their feet tread, God has given, as he promised Moses. No one will be able to stand before Joshua. The center of the promise is relationship, not territory: "I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you" (1:5).

3. Courage Rooted in the Word (Joshua 1:7–9)

The second "be strong" is tied to the law. Joshua's success depends on keeping the Book of the Law in his mouth and meditating on it day and night (compare Psalm 1:2). "Good success" here means acting wisely and carrying out God's purpose, not wealth or comfort.

4. One People (Joshua 1:10–18)

Joshua calls the eastern tribes to keep their promise. They answer with obedience and with God's own words back to Joshua: "Only be strong and courageous" (1:18). Courage is given and received within the community.

5. An Unlikely House (Joshua 2:1–7)

The spies come to the house of Rahab, a prostitute, whose home was built into Jericho's wall. She hides them and misleads the king's men. The text records her actions without praising her deception; the New Testament later commends her faith and her welcome of the spies.

6. Rahab's Confession (Joshua 2:8–14)

Rahab knows what the LORD has done at the Red Sea and to Sihon and Og, and she confesses, "the LORD your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath." Her words echo Deuteronomy 4:39. A Canaanite outsider says what Israel was taught to say. She asks for chesed (חֶסֶד), steadfast kindness (2:12), the same loyal covenant love the LORD shows his own people, and she asks for a sure sign.

7. The Scarlet Cord (Joshua 2:15–24)

The cord in the window marks her house for rescue, as the blood on the doorposts marked Israel's houses at Passover. The spies return with a report of faith, the opposite of the ten spies forty years earlier (Numbers 13–14).

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.3)

1.3 Q1: Three times the LORD tells Joshua to be strong and courageous, and each time he gives a reason (1:6, 7, 9). What do those reasons say about where real courage comes from?

1.3 Q2: Joshua's courage is tied to keeping God's word in his mouth and meditating on it day and night (1:8). What does meditating on Scripture look like in an ordinary week, and how might it make someone braver?

1.3 Q3: The eastern tribes answer Joshua with "Only be strong and courageous" (1:18). When has someone else's encouragement given you courage you did not have on your own?

1.3 Q4: Rahab, a Canaanite and a prostitute, confesses that "the LORD your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath" (2:11). What does it say about God that one of the first people of faith in Joshua comes from outside Israel?

1.3 Q5: The scarlet cord in the window was the sign that Rahab's household would be saved (2:18). What does this sign remind you of from Israel's earlier story, and why might God give his people visible signs of his promises?

◆ LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY — SECTION 1.3 · SECTION PACING TARGET: 22 MINUTES

- **Pacing & Time Target:** 22 minutes. Guided Scripture Reading with leader summaries, 6 minutes; Anchor Verses and Teaching Narrative, 6 minutes; discussion, 10 minutes (about 2 minutes per question).
- **Facilitation Cues & Follow-Up Probes:**
  - Have one reader take 1:1–9 and two readers take 2:8–14 (one for Rahab and one for the spies). Have the group listen for "be strong and courageous" as 1:1–9 is read. Describe Rahab's house in words: a home built into the city wall, with a window to the outside.
  - Follow-up probe for **1.3 Q1**: Which reason speaks to you most: God's promise, God's word, or God's presence? Is God commanding Joshua to feel brave or to act? What is the difference?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.3 Q2**: What does the word "meditate" suggest, quiet reflection or speaking under your breath? What gets in the way of this in your week? What is one passage you could carry with you?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.3 Q3**: What did that person say or do? Why does courage often come through other people? Who might need to hear those words from you?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.3 Q4**: What had Rahab heard, and how did she respond differently from the rest of Jericho (2:11)? What does she ask the spies for? Where else in the Bible do outsiders surprise God's people with their faith?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.3 Q5**: What did Israel put on their doorposts in Egypt (Exodus 12:13)? What do the cord and the blood have in common? What signs of his promises has God given the church?
- **LEADER FLAG 1: "Good success" is not a prosperity promise (1:7–9)**
  - The phrases "make your way prosperous" and "have good success" can be heard as a promise of wealth, health, or comfort for anyone who reads the Bible enough. The Hebrew words mean acting wisely and carrying a task through to its goal (see Hebrew Word Study). Joshua's "success" was completing God's mission of bringing Israel into the land, and it included hard battles and setbacks (chapter 7). Present Bible meditation as the way to faithful obedience, not as a technique for getting results. Be gentle with members who are struggling financially or with illness; the passage does not mean they lack faith.
- **LEADER FLAG 2: Rahab the prostitute and her lie (2:1–7)**
  - Members may ask how Scripture can honor a prostitute, and whether her lie to the king's men was right. On her profession, the text names it plainly; she is called "Rahab the prostitute" even in the New Testament (Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25), and the point is grace: God welcomes sinners who turn to him. Avoid speculation about her life and avoid crude jokes. Do not say that her name means "proud"; it more likely means "broad" or "wide." On her lie, Christians have held different views, from seeing it as sin that God forgave to seeing it as allowable in a time of war to protect life. The text neither praises nor condemns the lie; the New Testament commends her faith and her protection of the messengers, not her deception. Acknowledge the views briefly and keep the focus on her faith.
- **LEADER FLAG 3: The fear of the nations and the language of destruction (2:9–11; 3:10)**
  - Rahab's words "whom you devoted to destruction" (2:10) introduce the cherem (חֵרֶם), the ban, which will return in Week 2 at Jericho. Explain briefly that the ban was a unique, time-bound command tied to this moment in God's plan and to his judgment on Canaan's long wickedness (Genesis 15:16; Deuteronomy 9:4–5). Rahab's story already shows that the ban was not the only possible outcome: a Canaanite who turned to the LORD was spared. Do not apply these texts to any modern people, nation, or conflict. Tell the group that Week 2 will take up the hard questions more fully.
- **Pitfalls to Steer Around:** Do not turn 1:8 into a formula for success. Do not spend long on whether Rahab was an innkeeper rather than a prostitute; the word zonah (זוֹנָה) means prostitute, and the ESV renders it so. Do not press the scarlet cord into a detailed symbol of the cross; it is a sign of rescue that recalls Passover.
- **Additional Research Notes:** Deuteronomy 31:6–8 is the source of 1:5–6, and Hebrews 13:5 quotes "I will never leave you nor forsake you." Psalm 1:2–3 uses the same language of meditating day and night and prospering. Rahab's confession (2:11) echoes Deuteronomy 4:39. Her rescue is told in 6:22–25 (Week 2). Numbers 13–14 provides the contrast with the earlier spies.

- **Ancient Near Eastern Research Notes:** Houses built into or upon a city's wall are known from ancient sites; Rahab's window opened to the outside of the city (2:15). Flax was harvested in spring and laid out on flat roofs to dry, which fits the season of Passover and the Jordan in flood (3:15; 4:19; 5:10). An inn or a prostitute's house was a natural place for strangers to lodge without notice. Oaths in the ancient Near East were sworn in the name of a god, and the spies swear a conditional oath ("our life for yours," 2:14) with clear terms: the cord, the household gathered inside, and silence.
- **Hebrew Word Study:**
  - Hagah (הָגָה), "meditate," in 1:8. The word means to murmur or speak quietly, as a person reads aloud to himself (it is also used for a lion growling over its prey, Isaiah 31:4). In this movement it shows that Joshua's courage is fed by a word kept constantly on his lips, not by a single reading.
  - Sakal (שָׂכַל) and tsalach (צָלַח), "good success" and "prosperous," in 1:7–8. Sakal means to act wisely or with insight (the ESV footnote at 1:7 reads "may act wisely"), and tsalach means to succeed in reaching a goal. In this movement they define success as wise obedience that carries God's mission through (Leader Flag 1).
  - Cherem (חֵרֶם), "devoted to destruction," in 2:10. The word means something set apart for God and removed from human use, often by destruction. In this movement it appears first on Rahab's lips, describing what the LORD did to Sihon and Og, and prepares for Jericho in Week 2 (Leader Flag 3).
  - Chesed (חֶסֶד), "kindness" or "steadfast love," in 2:12 and 2:14, paired with 'emet (אֱמֶת), "faithfulness," in 2:14. Chesed is loyal covenant love, the word used of God's own love for Israel. In this movement it shows Rahab asking the spies to treat her as one inside the covenant, and they promise to do so.
  - Tiqvah (תִּקְוָה), "cord," in 2:18 and 2:21. The same Hebrew word also means "hope" elsewhere (for example Jeremiah 29:11). In this movement it names the scarlet cord of rescue; the double meaning is often noted, but it should be offered only as a possibility, not as a hidden message in the text.

Section 1.4

Movement 2: Crossing the Jordan (Joshua 3:1–17)

Passage **Joshua 3:1–17**

Guided Scripture Reading

Open your Bible to **Joshua 3**. Read aloud in this order:

- **Reader 1: Joshua 3:1–6** — The people camp by the Jordan; the officers command them to follow the ark at a distance; Joshua tells them to consecrate themselves.
- **Leader summary of Joshua 3:7–8** — The LORD promises to exalt Joshua so that Israel will know he is with Joshua as he was with Moses; the priests are told to stand still in the river.
- **Reader 2: Joshua 3:9–17** (focal passage) — "The living God is among you": the ark of the Lord of all the earth goes ahead; the waters stop at the town of Adam, far upstream; the priests stand on dry ground; all Israel crosses.

Anchor Verses (ESV)

> **Joshua 3:5:** Then Joshua said to the people, “Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you.”
>
> **Joshua 3:10–11:** And Joshua said, “Here is how you shall know that the living God is among you and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Hivites, the Perizzites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, and the Jebusites. Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is passing over before you into the Jordan.
>
> **Joshua 3:17:** Now the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firmly on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan, and all Israel was passing over on dry ground until all the nation finished passing over the Jordan.

Teaching Narrative: The Living God Goes Before

1. Waiting by the River (Joshua 3:1–4)

After three days by the Jordan, the officers tell the people to watch for the ark and follow it, keeping a distance of about 2,000 cubits (about half a mile), "that you may know the way you shall go, for you have not passed this way before" (paraphrase of 3:4). God's presence leads; the people follow on a road they have never walked.

2. "Consecrate Yourselves" (Joshua 3:5)

Before the wonder, the people prepare their hearts. God's coming "wonders" call for readiness and holiness, as at Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:10–11).

3. Joshua Exalted (Joshua 3:7–8)

God promises to confirm Joshua before all Israel, not for Joshua's glory, but so that the people will know God is with him as he was with Moses (fulfilled in 4:14).

4. The Living God and the Lord of All the Earth (Joshua 3:9–13)

The crossing will be the sign that the living God is among them and will drive out the nations. The ark is the ark of "the Lord of all the earth": the God of Israel rules the whole world, including the river and the land.

5. The Waters Stand (Joshua 3:14–16)

The Jordan is overflowing its banks at harvest time. As soon as the priests' feet touch the water, the river stops far upstream at Adam and is cut off.

6. On Dry Ground (Joshua 3:17)

The priests stand firm in the middle of the riverbed while the whole nation passes over. The crossing echoes the Red Sea (Exodus 14:21–22), and the next chapter will make the link explicit (4:23).

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.4)

> **1.4 Q1:** The people were to follow the ark "for you have not passed this way before" (3:4). What new road are you facing right now, and what would it look like to follow God's lead on it?

1.4 Q2: Joshua told the people to consecrate themselves because "tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you" (3:5). How might preparing your heart change the way you experience what God does?

1.4 Q3: Joshua says the crossing will show "that the living God is among you" (3:10). What difference does it make to believe that God is living and present, not distant?

1.4 Q4: The waters did not stop until the priests' feet touched the river (3:13–15). Why might God ask his people to step forward before they see the way open?

1.4 Q5: The priests stood firm on dry ground until "all the nation finished passing over" (3:17). What does this picture suggest about the role of leaders and of those who stay until everyone else is safely through?

◆ LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY — SECTION 1.4 · SECTION PACING TARGET: 20 MINUTES

- **Pacing & Time Target:** 20 minutes. Guided Scripture Reading, 5 minutes; Anchor Verses and Teaching Narrative, 5 minutes; discussion, 10 minutes (about 2 minutes per question; drop 1.4 Q5 if time is short).
- **Facilitation Cues & Follow-Up Probes:**
  - Have the group listen for the words "pass over" and "passing over" as 3:9–17 is read. Describe the scene in words: the river in spring flood, the town of Adam about 18 miles upstream, and the priests standing in the middle of the riverbed. Note that chapter 4 continues the same crossing next week.
  - Follow-up probe for **1.4 Q1**: What makes an unfamiliar road frightening? What did the ark represent for Israel? What helps you stay close enough to see where God is leading?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.4 Q2**: What did consecration involve at Sinai (Exodus 19:10–15)? What might it look like for us before worship or a big decision? How can preparation change our expectations?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.4 Q3**: What is the difference between a living God and an idol (Psalm 115:3–8)? Where do you most need to remember that God is present? How did the crossing prove it?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.4 Q4**: What did the priests risk by stepping in? What is the difference between foolish risk and faith based on God's word? When have you seen a way open only after you obeyed?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.4 Q5**: Why did the priests stay until the very end? Who has stood in the middle for you while you passed through something hard? Who might need you to do the same?

- **LEADER FLAG 4: The miracle at the Jordan (3:13–17)**
  - Some members may ask whether the crossing was a natural event. Note that the Jordan has been blocked by landslides near Adam (Tell ed-Damiyeh) at least twice in recorded history, in AD 1267 and in 1927, stopping the river for hours. Some see a similar event here, timed by God. Present this as a possible means, not an explanation that removes the miracle: the text stresses that the waters stopped exactly when the priests' feet touched the water, at flood season, by God's word (3:13, 15–16). Do not insist on any one mechanism, and do not mock either those who see a natural means or those who do not.
- **Pitfalls to Steer Around:** Do not turn the crossing into a general lesson about "stepping out" in any risky venture; the priests stepped in on God's explicit word. Avoid developing baptism at length here; 1.5 touches it carefully. Do not linger on the list of nations in 3:10; Week 2 and the Leader Flags deal with the conquest.
- **Additional Research Notes:** Exodus 14:21–22 and 15:8 describe the Red Sea crossing; Joshua 4:23–24 links the two. Psalm 114:3–5 celebrates both together, picturing the sea fleeing and the Jordan turning back. Exodus 19:10–15 provides the background for "consecrate yourselves." 2 Kings 2:8, 14 records Elijah and Elisha crossing the Jordan on dry ground.
- **Ancient Near Eastern Research Notes:** The Jordan overflows its banks in spring when snow melts on Mount Hermon and the barley harvest begins (3:15), so the crossing came at the hardest season. Neighboring peoples carried images of their gods into battle and processions. The ark held no image but contained the covenant tablets; the God of Israel was present without a form. Some ancient peoples thought of rivers and seas as divine powers; here "the Lord of all the earth" commands the river.
- **Hebrew Word Study:**
  - Hitqaddashu (הִתְקַדָּשׁוּ), "consecrate yourselves," in 3:5, with nifla'ot (נִפְלָאוֹת), "wonders." Qadash (קָדַשׁ) means to set apart as holy; nifla'ot is the word used for God's wonders in Egypt (Exodus 3:20). In this movement the pair joins preparation and miracle: God's people make themselves ready because God is about to act as he did at the exodus.
  - 'Avar (עָבַר), "pass over," throughout chapter 3 (for example 3:1, 6, 11, 14, 16, 17; compare 1:2, 11, 14). The verb is repeated again and again in chapters 3–4. In this movement it carries the week's whole movement toward the land, and it is the climax word of 3:17: "until all the nation finished passing over the Jordan."
  - 'Adon kol-ha'arets (אֲדוֹן כָּל-הָאָרֶץ), "the Lord of all the earth," in 3:11 and 3:13. 'Adon (אָדוֹן) means lord or master. In this movement the title claims that the God whose ark leads Israel is not a local god of one tribe or river but the ruler of the whole earth, which is why the Jordan obeys.

Section 1.5

Canonical Horizon: The Greater Joshua, Rahab's Faith, and the God Who Will Not Leave

Passage **Joshua 1:9**

Tracing the Thread Across Scripture

Joshua's name, Rahab's faith, and God's promise never to leave all reach forward to Jesus Christ and to the people he gathers. Turn to each passage as the connections are traced.

1. The Greater Joshua (Matthew 1:21; Hebrews 4:8–11)

Jesus bears Joshua's name, "the LORD saves." The angel tells Joseph to call him Jesus "for he will save his people from their sins." Hebrews says that if Joshua had given Israel rest, God would not have spoken of another day; a Sabbath rest still remains for God's people, and Jesus leads them into it.

2. A Greater Successor Than Joshua (Hebrews 3:1–6)

Moses was faithful as a servant in God's house; Christ is faithful as the Son over it. Joshua carried on Moses' work; Jesus brings it to completion.

3. The Commission Renewed (Matthew 28:18–20)

Jesus sends his disciples into all nations with a promise that echoes Joshua 1:5, 9: "I am with you always, to the end of the age." Courage for the mission rests on the presence of the one who sends.

4. Passing Through the Waters (1 Corinthians 10:1–2; Matthew 3)

Paul speaks of Israel being "baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea," and Jesus is baptized in the Jordan, the same river Israel crossed. These are resonances, not direct claims in Joshua: God's people pass through water into new life under his leading.

5. Rahab's Faith (Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25)

Hebrews names Rahab in the hall of faith: by faith she did not perish with the disobedient, because she had welcomed the spies. James points to her as one whose faith showed itself in action.

6. Rahab in the Family of Jesus (Matthew 1:5)

Rahab becomes the mother of Boaz and an ancestor of David and of Jesus. The outsider rescued by a scarlet cord becomes part of the Messiah's family line.

7. "I Will Not Leave You or Forsake You" (Hebrews 13:5–6; Psalm 118:6)

Hebrews takes God's promise to Joshua and gives it to every believer: "I will never leave you nor forsake you," so we can say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear." Jesus is Immanuel, "God with us" (Matthew 1:23).

8. Be Strong in Grace (2 Timothy 2:1)

Paul tells Timothy, his successor, to be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, echoing the handoff from Moses to Joshua.

Anchor Verse (ESV)

> **Joshua 1:9:** Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.

Group Discussion Questions (Section 1.5)

1.5 Q1: Joshua and Jesus share the same name, "the LORD saves." What did Joshua's leadership accomplish, and what does Jesus accomplish that Joshua could not (Hebrews 4:8–11)?

1.5 Q2: Rahab, a Canaanite prostitute, is named in the hall of faith (Hebrews 11:31) and in the family line of Jesus (Matthew 1:5). What hope does her story give to people who think their past puts them beyond God's reach?

1.5 Q3: Hebrews 13:5–6 gives God's promise to Joshua, "I will never leave you nor forsake you," to every believer. Where do you most need that promise this week, and how might it change what you are afraid of?

◆ LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY — SECTION 1.5 · SECTION PACING TARGET: 12 MINUTES

- **Pacing & Time Target:** 12 minutes. Teaching connections, 6 minutes; discussion, 6 minutes (about 2 minutes per question).
- **Facilitation Cues & Follow-Up Probes:**
  - Assign participants to look up Matthew 1:21, Hebrews 4:8–11, Hebrews 11:31, Matthew 1:5, and Hebrews 13:5–6 ahead of time. Keep the focus on how the whole Bible's story unfolds from Joshua to Christ, not on new Joshua detail.
  - Follow-up probe for **1.5 Q1**: What kind of rest did Joshua give, and how long did it last? What kind of rest does Jesus give (Matthew 11:28–30)? How does it help to know the name itself means "the LORD saves"?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.5 Q2**: What did Rahab do with what she had heard? Who else appears in Jesus' family line in Matthew 1? What would you say to someone who feels too far gone for God?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.5 Q3**: What fear does the promise speak to most directly? How does Hebrews connect the promise to contentment (13:5)? What would change if you believed it fully?
- **Pitfalls to Steer Around:** Do not let 1.5 drift back into retelling Joshua 1–3. Do not press the Jordan crossing into a direct prophecy of Christian baptism; present it as a resonance. Avoid turning Rahab's story into a lesson about how far a person must fall to receive grace.
- **Additional Research Notes:** Numbers 13:16 records Moses renaming Hoshea as Joshua. Hebrews 4:8 calls Joshua by the Greek form of his name, the same form as "Jesus." Acts 7:45 mentions Joshua bringing the tabernacle into the land. Deuteronomy 31:6, 8 and 1 Chronicles 28:20 (David to Solomon) use the same "will not leave you or forsake you" promise. Ruth 4:21 and 1 Chronicles 2:11 list Salmon and Boaz in the line that Matthew 1:5 connects to Rahab.

Personal & Group Application (Head, Heart, Hands)

HEAD	God's commission to Joshua rests on God's presence and God's word, and the crossing shows the living God at work among his people.
HEART	Courage is not the absence of fear but trust in the God who says, "I will be with you," a promise that reaches even an outsider like Rahab.
HANDS	Faith takes a step on God's word, keeps that word close day and night, and encourages others to be strong and courageous.

Section 1.6

Application, Looking Ahead, and Closing Prayer

Application

Take a few minutes to move this week's study into everyday life. Discuss these three questions together and write down what you want to remember:

1.6 Q1: Where is God asking you to "be strong and courageous" right now, and which of his promises can you hold on to as you do?

1.6 Q2: What is one practical way you could keep God's word "in your mouth" this week, such as memorizing a verse, reading aloud, or praying through a passage?

1.6 Q3: Who is someone outside your usual circle who may be closer to faith than you think, as Rahab was, and how could you welcome them this week?

Looking Ahead to Next Week

Recap: In Week 1, God commissioned Joshua with a promise of his presence and a call to courage rooted in his word; Rahab confessed the LORD and was promised rescue by a scarlet cord; and Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground behind the ark.

Transition: The crossing is not yet finished. Next week twelve stones are taken from the riverbed so that future children will ask, "What do those stones mean?"

Week 2 Overview — Stones of Remembrance, Walls of Jericho (Joshua 4:1–6:27): Movement 1, Memorial, Circumcision, and the Commander (4:1–5:15), covers the twelve memorial stones, the new generation circumcised at Gilgal, the first Passover in the land, the end of the manna, and Joshua's meeting with the commander of the LORD's army. Movement 2, The Walls Fall (6:1–27), covers the seven days of marching, the fall of Jericho, the ban on the city, and Rahab's rescue. The Canonical Horizon traces remembering God's acts, the heart circumcised in Christ, and the faith that brought the walls down.

Focal Readings to Preview

- Joshua 4:1–9
- Joshua 4:19–24
- Joshua 5:13–15
- Joshua 6:1–5
- Joshua 6:20–25

My One Concrete Step for the Week Ahead

Write down or name aloud the specific rhythm, boundary, or conversation you want to practice before next week's gathering:

Closing Prayer

Close your time together by inviting each person to share a one-sentence takeaway or prayer request, then pray together along these lines:

Closing Group Prayer

LORD our God, you were with Moses, and you are with your people still. We confess the fears that keep us standing on the riverbank when you have told us to go forward. Give us hearts that keep your word in our mouths and meditate on it day and night, so that our courage rests on your promises and not on ourselves. Thank you for Rahab, who heard what you had done and trusted you, and for the mercy that welcomed an outsider into your people. Thank you most of all for Jesus, the greater Joshua, who will never leave us or forsake us. Make us strong and courageous to follow wherever you lead this week. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

◆ LEADER GUIDE OVERLAY — SECTION 1.6 · SECTION PACING TARGET: 9 MINUTES

- **Pacing & Time Target:** 9 minutes. Application and questions, 5 minutes; Looking Ahead and Focal Readings, 2 minutes; Concrete Step and Closing Prayer, 2 minutes.
- **Facilitation Cues & Follow-Up Probes:**
  - Encourage participants to write their concrete step before the prayer. Let the group know that Week 2 includes the fall of Jericho and the first of the book's hard passages about war, and that the study will take time with them. Invite a volunteer to read the closing prayer or pray in their own words.
  - Follow-up probe for **1.6 Q1**: What makes this step frightening? Which promise from 1:1–9 fits it best? Who could pray with you about it?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.6 Q2**: What time of day is most realistic? Which verse from this week would you start with? How can the group help you keep at it?
  - Follow-up probe for **1.6 Q3**: What might that person already know about God? What would welcome look like in practice? What fears might keep you from reaching out?
- **Pitfalls to Steer Around:** Do not let application become a call to vague bravery; keep it tied to God's word and presence. Avoid pressing members to share private fears they are not ready to name. Do not rush the prayer to make up lost time; trim the recap instead.
- **Additional Research Notes:** Joshua 4:6–7 and 4:21–24 continue the crossing with the memorial stones. Joshua 5:13–15 parallels Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:5). Hebrews 11:30 ("By faith the walls of Jericho fell down") leads into Week 2.