

FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS

DATE: SUNDAY, 27TH OF JUNE 2021 | DARING GREATLY SERIES: PART 2

JOSHUA 5:13-14

Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?"

"Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come." Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?"

NOTES FOR LEADERS:

We are meeting online at 09H00 every Sunday. There are no in-person services currently.

START TALKING

1. What new insight did you gain from Sunday's message?
2. Which do you prefer for navigating directions to a place you've never been before: reading a map or following GPS prompts?

START THINKING

1. How might you apply the lessons from Mooi's message to a "battle" you're currently facing in your life?
2. Read Joshua 5:13-14. What do you think of Joshua's reaction to the Commander of the Lord's army? How might you express greater reverence to God?

START SHARING

1. Share about a time that you sought direction from God, and His guidance was totally different to what you expected. What was the situation? How did you know that the guidance was from God? How was your situation changed by following His guidance?
2. Joshua chose faith over doubt? How have you personally chosen faith over doubt? Share specific scriptures that speak to you on this subject.

START PRAYING

Take a couple of quiet minutes in prayer – encourage each member to submit their challenges to the Lord by asking the Holy Spirit, "what should I do?" and then allowing God to direct them.

START DOING

Identify a battle in your life that you're facing. How is it negatively impacting you? Ask God for a solution and tell Him you are willing to obey His instructions/directions. Then follow through on His guidance - even if it's different to what you expected.

SUMMARY

OF SUNDAY'S MESSAGE

This Sunday, in part two of our series, Daring Greatly, Mooi shared a challenging message on following God's directions. The key scriptures for this message are found in Joshua chapters 5 and 6. In Joshua chapters 3 and 4, we find some additional context regarding following God's instructions.

In chapter 3, the Israelites needed to cross the Jordan River to get to Canaan. God gave very specific instructions to Joshua: the seven priests were to carry the Ark of the Covenant and go ahead of the people. When the priests reached the river's edge, they were to stand in the water. As did this, the Lord would part the river so they could pass through on dry land. It's almost the same picture that we see in the book of Exodus, where the Israelites had to cross the Red Sea. The difference was that this time the priests had to carry the Ark of the Covenant and had to stand in the waters of the river, and God would part it, whereas, in Exodus, Moses had a rod which he had to put on the Red Sea before it parted. This teaches us that there was a unique strategy for a unique situation.

In chapter 4, when they reached the other side of the river, God instructed Joshua that the 12 leaders (each representing a tribe of Israel) were to pick up a stone from the middle of the Jordan River where they had crossed and to build a monument with those stones as a memorial. From this, we learn that there was an instruction for every situation the Israelites encountered. Every promise the Lord gives us comes with directions and instructions that we are to follow – not in our own way but in His way – so we can fulfil His promise to us.

In chapter 5, Joshua received more instructions from the Lord. God told Joshua that the Israelites were to be circumcised and celebrate Passover before entering the Promised Land. Both were significant preparations for the conquest of Canaan.

The reason for the circumcision was because those Israelites born in the desert were not circumcised. The Israelites had to be consecrated to the Lord's service before they could undertake the Lord's warfare and take possession of the Promised Land. Circumcision marked every male as a son of Abraham, bound to the Lord's service, and was the prerequisite for the Passover.

Since Israel was now back on covenant ground, the next step was to keep the Passover. This would be the third celebration of Passover in Israel's history: it was celebrated before they left Egypt (Exodus 12). It was observed at Mount Sinai (Numbers 9), and now they were to celebrate Passover again before going into Canaan under Joshua's leadership.

The next set of instructions come with the appearance of an angel: *Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?" "Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come." Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?"* Joshua 5:13-14.

You can imagine the suspense and expectation Joshua and the Israelites might have been feeling at this time – they may even have fearful or anxious about what they were going to encounter in taking on Canaan. And then suddenly, Joshua encounters an angel of superior rank. Some say it was the appearance of God Himself in human form. The significance of the

angelic appearance was the first sign of a new strategy the Lord was going to use in this particular situation. That they were no longer going to follow their familiar ways, but His way now. They were to take His orders and fight the battle God's way – not the way they were used to fighting. The lesson here for us is that we will not always win the "battle" with our experience – there are journeys that will require us to follow the urging of the Holy Spirit into the unfamiliar. We have to learn to lean in and trust Him.

Following that, the Israelites conquered Jericho. And even in that, there were new directions and guidance:

- God announced the victory before the battle. Then the Lord said to Joshua, *"See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men."* Joshua 6:2
- God instructed them as follows: *March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. Have seven priests carry trumpets of rams' horns in front of the ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have the whole army give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse and the army will go up, everyone straight in."* Joshua 6:3-5

The Israelites did not require any experience to conquer Canaan – just following the instructions of the Lord. Our lesson: Sometimes, instructions from God may seem strange, but it's important to follow them.

Joshua's was known for his wisdom and courage. For the great success that was with him. And the power and the presence of God with him – which struck terror into the inhabitants of the land and made his conquest so easy. . . . *the Lord was with Joshua, and his fame spread throughout the land.* Joshua 6: 27. Every instruction or direction from the Lord is significant. We should always be sensitive to the Holy Spirit's leading and avoid putting Him in a box based on our own experience.