

The Story: Men's Bible Study Lesson Guide

Chapter 7: The Battle Begins

Men, Rules, and Challenges

Men love _____

God not only gives Joshua the rules, He gives him the _____ to stay within the rules

Today's Equipping Point:

Be a man of God's _____, a man of _____, and a man _____ with God

1. A man of God's Word

The Story Page 89

He said, *"Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave to you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Keep this Book of Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."*

2. A Man of Prayer

"So the Lord was with Joshua, and his fame spread throughout the land."

Our lesson here is to _____ to God

3. Be a man identified with God

Matthew 5:16 says, *"...let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."*

Joshua 24:14-15

"Now fear the Lord and serve Him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshipped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. But, if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."

Discussion Questions

1. Which of these is your weakest link: God's Word, prayer, identity with God?
2. Have you decided whom you and your household will serve? Discuss what that means.
3. Are you ready to answer God's "MEN WANTED" ad? Discuss your answer.

The Story Men's Group
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Mountain Christian Church, Joppa, MD
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Chapter 7: The Battle Begins

NOTE: The Men's Group at Oak Hills Church did not meet during Week 7, so there is not a lesson from Brad Tuggle written for that week. This lesson was written in 2013 by the men's Bible study leader at Mountain Christian Church, and thoughtfully shared for the benefit of all the Story churches!

7:00-7:05 Youth Video (3:00)

7:05-7:10 Intro

- Salmon

- Have you ever watched a documentary on TV or even personally witnessed how salmon swim upstream to spawn?
 - It's quite fascinating
 - In the 1960s and early 1970's New York State and Canada collaborated to bring salmon fishing back into the Great Lakes region
 - I grew up in Central New York State and had the experience of fishing for some of the first returning schools of salmon to the Salmon River on the eastern shore of Lake Ontario
 - It was an amazing sight to see these huge fish swimming with all of their might against strong current
 - They literally launch themselves up waterfalls and over jagged rocks in the shallows where you can get a good look at their struggle
 - An irresistible force drives them upward and onward despite the barriers along the way
 - It's inspiring to watch
 - But, some of the salmon get tired
 - In their exhaustion, they stop swimming and immediately are swept back downstream
 - The current gets the best of them and they give up
- Following God's will in this world can be a lot like being a salmon swimming upstream
 - God calls us to fight against the cultural current every day
 - It's a battle, a war, and a daily challenge to keep living for God in a world where there is a strong current opposing God's will and ways
 - We have a choice
 - Swim with all your might and keep fighting the pressure to conform
 - Or, give up and find ourselves floating back downstream into the habits and practices that were a part of your story before you became a follower
 - I wake up every day determined to follow God's will, but so often the current of political correctness or expediency overcome my willingness to press on

- o Can you think of a time in your life when you were faced with an overwhelming challenge that you needed to confront?
 - What was it?
 - How did you respond?

- Review

- o In chapter 6 of *The Story*, God's plan was clear:
 - Deliver His people through a series of miracles
 - Defeat their enemies
 - Give them a covenant and a set of laws to make them a chosen nation
 - And, provide them a land of promise
 - Simple right?
 - God speaks...the people listen...God delivers...the people believe
 - God provides...the people trust
 - Not so much!
 - Over and over, the nation of Israel waffles between following God and disobeying God
 - God gave them the rules, they agreed to follow them, God blesses them, but they turn away from Him
 - That's pretty much the pattern that began in the Garden and has been the theme of this story ever since
 - In Chapter 7, we are going to get a break from the pattern (thankfully) and see what happens when one man and his household choose to follow the Lord

- o Let's watch the Chapter 7 video to see what happens next

7:15-7:25 Adult Video (10:00)

7:25-7:50 Teaching Script

- Men, Rules, and Challenges

- o In Chapter 6, we read about Moses receiving the 10 commandments from God and delivering them to the people
 - Of all people, we men should love the fact that God provides us with the rules
 - Men don't do well without rules
 - In fact, they did a study a few years ago to see how road construction affects drivers
 - They found that when they set up shoulder cones or cement barriers, especially on each side of the highway, women tend to slow down, but men actually speed up!
 - When men leave the construction zone and drive beyond the barriers, they actually slow down again...women speed back up!
 - **Men love rules** (boundaries)
 - I heard this past week that the NFL has taken over as America's favorite pastime
 - o You remember that baseball has been America's favorite pastime up until now
 - o The Monday night football game between the Vikings and the Giants, not exactly the best teams in the NFL, drew a larger viewing audience than the first game of this year's World Series game between St. Louis and Boston
 - o The conclusion, I guess, is that the NFL must have taken over as the most popular sport in America!
 - Men love baseball and football...why is that?
 - Could it be that both sports are full of rules?

- But there are some differences between baseball and football...check this out...
- Play George Carlin's spoof on the difference between baseball and football <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=alkqNiBASfl>
- o Chapter 7 begins with God reviewing the rules with Joshua
 - He repeats His promises and promises that He made to Moses (Pages 89-90)
 - o No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life
 - o I will never leave you or forsake you
 - o Be strong and very courageous
 - As men, we should love this part of *The Story*
- It reminds me of a newspaper ad that appeared in the London Times on December 29, 1913 that read:
 - MEN WANTED: for hazardous journey, small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger. Safe return doubtful. Honor and recognition in case of success.
 - In 1914, Irish born Ernest Shackleton set out for his second of four attempts to cross Antarctica.
 - o This is how he advertised in order to find men for his crew.
 - o Some interesting trivia?
 - Unfortunately, the ship ("Endurance") became trapped in sea ice
 - The men were forced to trek their way on foot, and later, in lifeboats
 - An endeavor that cost them about two years
 - In an era littered with accounts of serious injuries and death on Antarctic expeditions, the fate of Shackleton's men is remarkable: Not a single man died
 - Sadly, Ernest Shackleton never managed to cross the South Pole in his lifetime
 - But he is known until today as a charismatic leader and a world-renowned adventurer.
 - By the way, Shackleton received 5000 applications that responded to the ad!
- You see, **men not only love rules, they also love challenges**
 - That's what God is doing here, challenging Joshua to lead His people into the long-awaited Promised Land
 - We have a "promised land" today that God is challenging us to
 - o It's leading a godly life amidst a decaying culture
 - That means running away from anything that lets God down; pornography, addictions, isolation, anger, etc.
 - Perhaps you need to set up some rules for yourself
 - o It's leading your family by being the spiritual pursuer for your wife and kids
 - Be the one to read scripture and kneel in prayer
 - Be the one to get up on Sunday morning (or shut the game off on Saturday afternoon) and get the family to church
 - Be the one to reach out to a widow or single parent to lend a hand
 - o It's working every day in integrity and being recognized as someone swimming upstream against the current in the marketplace
 - Work "as unto the Lord" not your boss or anyone else
 - Lean into your workplace relationships with care and understanding for a fellow worker

- God's promises are still good today for you and me
 - No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life
 - I will never leave you or forsake you
 - Be strong and very courageous
- **God not only gives Joshua the rules, He gives him the strategies to stay within the rules**
 - This leads us to this week's **Equipping Point:**
Be a man of God's Word, a man of prayer, and a man identified with God
 - 1. A man of God's Word
 - When the fathers of Israel, along with their families, finally crossed over into the promised land, they crossed on dry land
 - What's the big deal about that?
 - The big deal is that they walked on dry land that only seconds before had been a raging roaring river (here's some more trivia)
 - It was cresting above flood stage
 - It was a mile wide
 - It was 150 feet deep
 - In an instant, as soon as the priest's foot touched the water, the Jordan River rolled itself back
 - It obeyed its Creator
 - Not a drop of water remained
 - Sound familiar?
 - You see, when God encouraged Joshua to lead the nation of Israel into the promised land, their first barrier was the Jordan River
 - But, Joshua was a man of God's Word and from it he had evidence that God was good at drying things up so that people could cross over
 - God told Joshua that He was going to do this
 - 40 years before, He rolled back the Red Sea for Moses
 - Now He was going to do it again at the Jordan River to validate Joshua's leadership as Moses' successor
 - When you study God's Word and have experience with how He works, nothing is impossible!
 - But, you must listen to what God told Joshua here at the bottom of Page 89
 - He said, ***"Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave to you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Keep this Book of Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."***
 - Want to be prosperous and successful?
 - Be a man of God's Word
 - Obey God's Word
 - 2. A Man of Prayer
 - Through Joshua, we see prayer a little differently
 - God told Joshua not to go into battle without first listening to Him
 - When they conquered Jericho, it was a direct result of listening to all of God's instructions, and then carrying them out

- o Hasn't it seemed a little ridiculous to you that the army marched around the city walls for 6 days and then on the seventh day gave a shout and the walls came tumbling down?
 - o That was God testing Israel to see if they were listening to Him
 - o They were and He gave them the victory
 - o At the top of Page 94, it says, "***So the Lord was with Joshua, and his fame spread throughout the land.***"
- However, God had told Joshua and the Israelites that the spoil of war was His alone
 - o Everyone obeyed, except one man; Achan
 - o The results were different this time
 - Israel was defeated when they attacked Ai
 - Israel repented and Achan was killed for not listening
 - o God encouraged them and they listened and defeated Ai on their second try
- Our lesson here is to **listen to God**
 - I think that more often than not, our understanding of prayer is that it's about us talking to God
 - o Probably because you can hear yourself talk, but you can't audibly hear God
 - God spoke audibly to Joshua (we surmise), but He doesn't speak audibly to us, so we don't think that listening (like we're used to listening) works
 - We fill the silence with our own voices
 - Perhaps it would be better to "be still and know that I am God" is valuable
 - o Listening to God is more observing God and looking for how He answers through His word, other godly people, or circumstances
 - o So, train yourself to be a good listener by being an astute observer
- o 3. Be a man identified with God
 - Joshua was a man set apart by God to lead the nation He was building by doing great things
 - *The Story* says that he lived to be 110 years old
 - It says that the sun stopped in the middle of the day so that God could listen to him
 - By the end of his life, Joshua had subdued the whole region and left no survivors just as the Lord, the God of Israel, had commanded
 - Joshua left nothing undone of all that the Lord had commanded Moses
 - Joshua took the entire land
 - You and I can get lost in the fact that we probably won't lead a nation or a military campaign...that was Joshua's job
 - But, we are set apart nonetheless
 - Our job is to reflect what God has done in our lives to those around us and lead others to conclude that it is God working through us
 - Matthew 5:16 says, "*...let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.*"
 - o If you're a family man, lead your family in such a way that people around you see your family and give your Father in heaven the glory
 - o If you run a company, carry out business in such a way that people around you see you're your business and give your Father in heaven the glory

- o If you drive a truck, do it in such a way that people around you see how you treat other drivers and give your Father in heaven the glory
 - o If you're in sales, do it in such a way that people around you see how you treat customers and give your Father in heaven the glory
 - You and I (if you are a Christ follower) are set apart too
 - Be a man whose actions say, here is a man who is following God...I want to know that man because I want to know God
- Conclusion
 - o At the end of Joshua's life, Joshua went over God's laws and promises with the people once again
 - In Chapter 24:14-15, he says:

"Now fear the Lord and serve Him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshipped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. But, if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord."
 - Israel responded by pledging to follow the Lord
 - The charge for all of us today is to choose for ourselves who we will serve
 - o If you choose to serve the Lord, then this week, resolve to be a man of God's Word, a man of Prayer, and a man identified with God
 - o Rise to the challenges that are in front of you no matter how overwhelming they may seem today
 - God was bigger than the giants of Canaan
 - He is bigger than any giants in our way
 - o What if you ran across this ad in the newspaper today?
MEN WANTED: for hazardous journey, small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger. Safe return doubtful. Honor and recognition in case of success.
 - o God's Word has a similar challenge
MEN WANTED: to lead godly lives. No wages, sometimes hot and sometimes cold, long months in what seems to be the darkness, constant opposition from the culture. Safe return guaranteed. Honor and recognition from the words, "Well done good and faithful servant". Life everlasting.
 - And, it has this at the end; "Contact your Father in heaven"
 - The battle begins today, who's going to sign up?
 - o Chapter 7 has many lessons for us as men
 - o Use the discussion questions at the end of your notes to process what we are learning in this part of *The Story*

7:50-8:25

Group Discussion

8:25-8:30

Announcements and Prayer