

Joshua 23–24 Study Guide

“Choose This Day Whom You Will Serve”

Joshua 23–24 calls God’s people to remember, choose, and serve. Joshua’s farewell is not sentimental. It is urgent. God has been faithful. Not one word has failed. Therefore, Israel must not drift, compromise, or divide its worship.

The central call is:

“Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve.”

— **Joshua 24:15 NKJV**

And the practical command is:

“Put away the foreign gods which are among you, and incline your heart to the LORD God of Israel.”

— **Joshua 24:23 NKJV**

Emphasis: Joshua 24:14–24

Joshua 23–24 records Joshua’s farewell addresses. He is near the end of his life, and he calls Israel to remember what God has done, love the Lord, reject false gods, and serve Him sincerely. The heart of the passage is not merely a famous family motto, but a covenant call: **the God who has been faithful deserves undivided allegiance.**

1. Why does Joshua remind Israel of all the Lord has done? (Joshua 23:3; 24:1–13)

Joshua begins with God’s actions, not Israel’s accomplishments. The Lord called Abraham, delivered Israel from Egypt, brought them through the wilderness, gave victory, and placed them in a land they did not build or plant (Joshua 24:2–13).

Obedience is rooted in relationship. Israel is called to serve the Lord because they know who He is and what He has done for them.

Forward connection to Christ: Jesus says, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15). Obedience flows from love, not mere rule-keeping.

Everyday Application: Before asking, “What should I do?” remember, “Who is the Lord, and what has He done for me?”

2. Why does Joshua warn Israel against faithlessness after God has brought them into the land? (Joshua 23:6)

Joshua says: “Therefore be very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, lest you turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left.” — Joshua 23:6 NKJV

Israel’s greatest danger after victory is not that God will fail them, but that they will turn away from Him. Joshua calls them to courage because faithfulness requires more than winning battles. It requires continuing to trust, obey, and remain loyal to the Lord when life becomes settled.

This echoes Joshua 1:7–8, where courage was tied to keeping God’s Word. Now, at the end of Joshua’s life, the same issue remains: God’s people must not drift from the Word of God.

Forward connection to Christ: Jesus says the wise person is the one who hears His words and does them (Matthew 7:24–27). Faith that does not continue in obedience is unstable.

Everyday Application: Faithlessness often begins quietly. It may look like neglecting God’s Word, tolerating compromise, or assuming yesterday’s faith is enough for today. Joshua reminds us that staying faithful requires courage.

3. Why does Joshua warn Israel about clinging to the surrounding nations? (Joshua 23:7–13)

Joshua warns Israel not to serve or bow down to the gods of the nations. The danger is not merely being near other people; it is being pulled into their worship and loyalties. Israel is told instead to “hold fast to the LORD” (Joshua 23:8).

Forward connection to Christ: Jesus says, “Abide in Me” (John 15:4), and “Without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

Everyday Application: Ask not only, “Is this obviously wrong?” but, “Is this helping me hold fast to the Lord?”

4. What does Joshua mean when he says not one word of God has failed? (Joshua 23:14–16)

Joshua says, “Not one thing has failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spoke concerning you” (Joshua 23:14). God kept His promises. But Joshua also warns that God’s warnings are just as reliable as His promises (Joshua 23:15–16).

Forward connection to Christ: Jesus says, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away” (Matthew 24:35).

Everyday Application: We should trust both the promises that comfort us and the warnings that confront us.

5. What does it mean to “fear the LORD” and serve Him “in sincerity and in truth”? (Joshua 24:14)

Joshua says, “Now therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt.” The “therefore” matters. Because God has acted faithfully, Israel must respond with reverence, sincerity, and truth.

To fear the Lord means to honor Him with holy reverence, not casual familiarity. To serve Him in sincerity and truth means worship without pretense, divided loyalties, or hidden idols. Joshua is not asking for public words alone. He is calling for an honest heart and a cleansed household.

The command to “put away the gods” shows that some idolatry may still have been present among the people. This connects backward to Genesis 35:2, where Jacob told his household, “Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments.”

Forward connection to Christ: Jesus says true worshipers “will worship the Father in spirit and truth” (John 4:23–24). God is not looking for empty religious words, but true worship from the heart.

Everyday Application: Sincere faith requires removal, not just addition. We cannot simply add God to an already crowded shelf of loyalties. Some things must be put away.

6. Why does Joshua say, “Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve”? (Joshua 24:15)

Joshua presses Israel to make a clear decision. They cannot drift into faithfulness, and they cannot serve the Lord while keeping other gods. If they refuse the Lord, Joshua says they must choose whether they will serve the gods their fathers served beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land they now live.

This is a sobering moment. God has chosen, delivered, preserved, and blessed Israel (Joshua 24:2–13), but He does not treat their response as meaningless. Their choice matters. Joshua’s words show that people are responsible for the direction of their worship. If they insist on serving false gods, God may allow them to follow that path and experience the consequences of that choice.

That pattern appears elsewhere in Scripture. Romans 1 says that when people exchanged the truth of God for a lie, “God gave them up” to the desires they had chosen (Romans 1:24–25). That does not mean God approves of their rebellion. It means He sometimes judges people by allowing them to have what they insist on having.

Joshua’s own response is clear: “But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Joshua 24:15). He cannot choose for all Israel, but he can lead his own household in covenant faithfulness.

Forward connection to Christ: Jesus also calls people to decisive allegiance. He says, “No one can serve two masters” (Matthew 6:24). He also weeps over Jerusalem, saying, “How often I wanted to gather your children together... but you were not willing!” (Matthew 23:37). The Gospel presents both God’s gracious invitation and the real responsibility of human response.

Everyday Application: God does not force our love, but He does hold us responsible for our loyalties. Every day, our choices reveal whom or what we are serving. Joshua challenges us to stop treating faith as passive inheritance and to actively lead our lives and households toward the Lord.

7. Why does Joshua push back when the people say they will serve the Lord? (Joshua 24:16–20)

The people respond strongly: “Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods” (Joshua 24:16). They remember that the Lord brought them out of Egypt, preserved them, and drove out the nations before them (Joshua 24:17–18). Their answer sounds good.

But Joshua responds, “You cannot serve the LORD, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God” (Joshua 24:19). Joshua is not saying obedience is impossible in every sense. He is warning them not to speak lightly. The Lord is holy, and covenant loyalty is serious. They cannot claim Him while keeping rival gods.

Joshua's warning exposes the danger of emotional promises without honest repentance. The people must understand that the Lord will not be treated as one god among many.

Forward connection to Christ: Jesus warns people to count the cost before claiming discipleship. He says a person should not begin building without first considering the cost, and He concludes, "Whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:28–33).

Everyday Application: It is easy to say the right thing in a spiritual moment. Joshua reminds us that real commitment must survive beyond the emotion of the moment and show itself in surrendered loyalty.

8. Why does Joshua call the people to be witnesses against themselves? (Joshua 24:21–24)

The people insist, "No, but we will serve the LORD!" Joshua then says, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the LORD for yourselves, to serve Him" (Joshua 24:22). They answer, "We are witnesses!" Then Joshua gives the practical command: "Now therefore, put away the foreign gods which are among you, and incline your heart to the LORD God of Israel" (Joshua 24:23).

This is the heart of the passage. The people's confession must become action. They must put away false gods and incline their hearts toward the Lord. Their own words become testimony. They cannot later claim they did not know or did not choose.

This also shows that covenant renewal is not merely verbal. It involves memory, decision, witness, removal of idols, and heart direction.

Forward connection to Christ: In the Gospels, Jesus often moves people from words to actual allegiance. He asks, "But why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). He also teaches that a tree is known by its fruit (Matthew 7:17–20).

Everyday Application: A sincere "yes" to God should lead to a concrete "no" to whatever competes with Him. The question is not only, "Do I say I serve the Lord?" but, "What needs to be put away, and how is my heart being inclined toward Him?"