

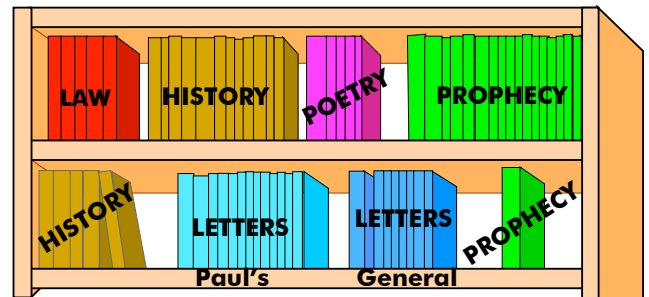
Before starting this lesson, read at least **Joshua 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 24**.

If possible read the whole book. You may find it helpful to read just the minimum chapters, go thru the lesson and then read the whole book. You will discover what works best for you.

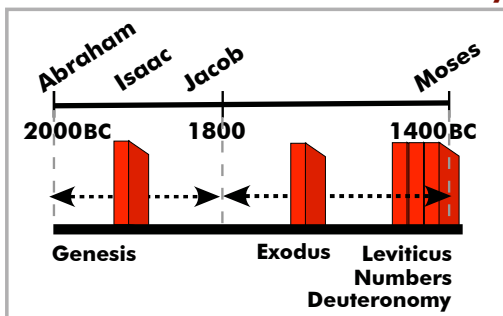
The Old Testament begins with 5 books called the *Books of the Law*. They were written by Moses.

In the first book of Genesis, God tells Abraham that his descendants thru Isaac and Jacob will be a great *nation* and will receive a *land*. This promise is made around 2000 BC. The three generations of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob form the beginning of the Jewish race. Some 200 years after God's promise (1800's BC), the family clan of Jacob moves to Egypt. All of this is in the book of Genesis.

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Content that can be dated historically



The next 4 books cover another 360 years. They describe how Jacob's family clan of 70, develops into the nation of Israel, the Israelites. They show that God has completed the first part of His promise.

The Jews **have** become a great nation (1400's BC).

Now we come to a new section of books, called the *Books of History*.

They were written, by the Levites – the descendants of Jacob's 3rd son, Levi.

The **LEVITES** were responsible for everything **sacred**.

One branch took care of the **tabernacle**.

Another branch was involved with the **sacrifices**.

Aaron's family line was chosen to be the Jewish **priests**.

As the years pass, they are given more and more duties. Just before entering the land of Canaan...

A Levite family is given responsibility for **Jewish history**.

They will write about **events** as they happen, starting from the time of Joshua and going thru the Old Testament. They will write, collect and save all the **historical** records.

In addition, Joshua as leader, writes history about taking the Jews into the land, the military tactics he used and the victories God gave them. When he dies, his military writings are given to the Levite **historians** for safekeeping.

Another family of Levites becomes responsible for Jewish **sacred writings**. They are the **scribes**, meaning **writers** or **copiers**. They will write or edit, collect, save and make copies of the **sacred** records. They start by collecting and saving the 5 books written by Moses.

LEVITES

Responsible for the Sacred

Tabernacle

Sacrifices

Priests

Historians

Scribes

So Moses developed the Levite **historians** and Levite **scribes**.

Levite **historians** wrote events as they happened, creating **historical** records.

At various times, Levite **scribes**, guided by the Holy Spirit, chose parts of the historical records and created **sacred** records, meaning, God's Word. We know them as the Old Testament *Books of History*.

The first of the Old Testament historical books is **Joshua**.

Some 50 years after Joshua's death, c. 1325 BC., the Holy Spirit leads the **scribes** to go thru the historical documents and take out parts of Joshua's writings, a few details about Joshua's death and one poem from the *Book of Jasher*, a book of poetry about the various wars.

As the scribes put this together and mention an important monument, they insert the phrase, *which remains to this day*. When Rahab is mentioned, they add, *she lives in Israel to this day*. By doing this, they are saying, *What Joshua said and did is historical and provable. The story of Rahab is real. The evidence is still here 50 years later.*

Many Bible scholars, including myself, believe Samuel was the final Levite scribe and editor of the book we call *Joshua*.

The book of Joshua uses the typical **JEWISH STYLE of WRITING**.

Events are not recorded in chronological order.

There is lots of repetition.

It is put together in the circular style, meaning it begins and ends with the same idea or emphasis.

It **begins** with the death of Moses.

It **ends** with 5 verses about the deaths or burials of Joshua, the bones of Joseph, and Eliezer, the son of Aaron.

It **begins** with Joshua ready to claim the land of their inheritance.

It **ends** with Joshua, Joseph and Eliezer buried on the land of their inheritance.

The emphasis or **THEME** of this book is - claiming the inheritance God had promised - receiving the land.

The **PURPOSE** of the book is 2-fold.

1. To make sure there would be a **permanent record** of claiming their inheritance.

Over the centuries, some Jewish historical records are going to be lost but God's Word, the sacred writings, will last forever. So the book of Joshua guarantees this part of their history will always be known.

2. To prove **God kept His promise** to Abraham.

Not only have his descendants become a great nation, but now they receive the **land** of Canaan.

It is what this book is all about.

The **OUTLINE** of the book.

Conquering the land 1-12

Dividing the land 13-22

Enjoying the land 23-24

DATE

These chapters cover some 17-25 years, around 1400 to 1375 BC. Because we are dealing with history from 3000 years ago, these dates can vary by 100 years one way or the other.

The stories connected with Joshua and Jericho are well known, so the majority of this lesson deals with background, culture and answers to questions about the stories – things that are not so well known.

At the end of Deuteronomy, God told Moses to climb Mt. Nebo.

It is located directly east of the Jordan River at the northern end of the Dead Sea. Mt. Nebo is 2700 feet high. From there, Moses is able to see most of the Promised Land, which covers 150 miles in length and 80 miles at the widest point. Altho Moses cannot enter the land, he has an opportunity to see it. Immediately afterwards, Moses dies and Joshua becomes the new leader.



Joshua had been born and raised in Egypt.

He grew up in slavery, as part of the people making bricks for the Egyptian king. He was 47 when Moses led the Jews out of Egypt. Two months later, at Mt. Sinai, he became the assistant or aide to Moses. Joshua 1:1.

The next year, when he was 48, he was chosen to be one of the 12 scouts that checked out the land. He believed God could give it to them.

Joshua was a natural born leader. Yet he continued to serve as Moses' assistant over a period of 40 years. The number 40 tells us it has been a time of testing. And he has proven he can wait for God's timing.

Moses had been a prophet to give the people God's laws and instructions. Joshua becomes leader when he is 88. But God has kept his health and body fit so he is like a 40-year-old. He will lead the people in military conquest as an army general. Think of him as General Joshua.

Joshua has all the qualities of a good leader. As he begins, God gives him encouragement.

Do not let this book of the law depart from your mouth. 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. 1:8

To understand this verse we need to understand Jewish culture and Jewish words.

The **book of the law** is the book of Deuteronomy - the summary of God's laws.

Do not let it depart from your mouth. Jewish people always read out loud, so the words of a book were in their mouth when they read. The phrase is a Hebrew idiom which means, *do not stop reading it*.

For the Jews, the word **meditate**, meant *to stop and think about a concept, idea or command*.

They were to fill their mind with everything they knew about God's laws - the book of Deuteronomy. They were then to ask God for wisdom in order to see its meaning and how to apply it. After spending so much time thinking about the idea or command, they would know it from memory. As they recited it, the word would continue to be in their mouth.

The Hebrew word **prosperous** meant: *to accomplish what God gave him to do*.

The Hebrew word **successful** meant: *insight, spiritual wisdom and common sense*

It is worth noting. The world's idea of success is money, power or fame. God's idea of success is insight, spiritual wisdom and common sense.

Now let's take these meanings and put them into the verse as a paraphrase. God tells Joshua,

*Keep reading this book of Deuteronomy. Carefully think about God's commands and obey them. If you obey, you will accomplish what God has given you to do. You will have insight and wisdom to know **what** to do and **when** to do it.*

With this encouragement, Joshua takes his first action. While all the Jews are still encamping just north of Mt. Nebo, Joshua secretly sends 2 scouts to Jericho.

Thirty nine years earlier, he had been one of the 12 scouts sent out publicly. When the group came back and gave public reports, the people voted to reject the land. Joshua does not want this to happen to the 2nd generation, so he sends just 2 scouts and does it in secret. The Jewish people have no idea he is doing this. When the 2 scouts return, they will talk only to him. Even if it is negative, as General, he will make the final decision.



Thirty nine years earlier, when the scouts entered the land and saw the walls and the giants, they came back and said they felt like grasshoppers. In their fear, ten of them said the Canaanites also thought of them as grasshoppers. But the scouts had not talked with any of the people to know what they really thought. So Joshua tells his 2 scouts to talk with someone who would know the situation. This is why they go to the nearest inn or motel.

The person they talk with is a woman named Rahab.

She tells them,

I know that the Lord has given this land to you and that a great fear of you has fallen on us, so that all who live in this country are melting in fear because of you. 2:9

Rahab not only tells them about the people of Jericho, but also what the whole country is thinking.

When we heard of it, (what your God had done) our hearts sank and everyone's courage failed because of you, for the Lord your God, is God in heaven above and on the earth below. 2:11

This is an amazing statement. Pagan religions believed a god could only control one area or one object, so they had one god to control the sky, while a different god controlled the sun. Rahab, born and raised in the Canaanite religion, has come to understand the Jewish God, Yahweh is different. She believes He is God over everything in heaven and over everything on earth. Rahab has become a believer in the God of the Jews. While she was a prostitute in the past, as a believer, she no longer is.

As she is talking with the scouts, agents from the king come to arrest them. Rahab hides them on the flat roof of her house, underneath stalks of flax that have been placed there to dry. When the agents ask about them, Rahab answers,

True, they were here,, but they just left and headed towards the river. If you hurry you can catch them.

The king's servants leave immediately, expecting to find the scouts. Rahab then turns to the scouts and says,

Because I protected you and saved your lives, now I am asking you to protect me and my family.

Rahab believes Israel's God is the only God. Because she wants to identify herself with His people and because she believes they will conquer the city, she asks for protection. The scouts agree. When they come to destroy Jericho, she and anyone inside her house will be spared. She is to mark her house by tying the same scarlet rope in the window that they will use to escape from her house.

These are the basics of the story. Now let's deal with the questions.

1. Why would godly men go to the house of a prostitute to get information?

Rahab's house is built into the wall of the city, on the backside where it was lower. Scholars believe her home was also a store that sold linen cloth. When she hid the scouts, she was able to completely hide them under the flax, drying on her roof. She would only have that much flax if she were weaving linen cloth. And those who made linen cloth were also the ones who sold it. This means she had a store in her house.

Homes built in the city wall that were near a city gate, usually included a small inn or motel. People who entered the city would automatically know where to find a place to stay overnight.

To get a better picture of her lodging, think of the early days in the wild west of the United States. People entered a town and went to the nearest saloon. It was the place to eat as well as drink. There were rooms upstairs for travelers to stay. If a man wanted the services of a prostitute, they were available. But it did not mean everyone used them. Local products were available to buy. And the saloon was certainly the best place to get information about the area.

It was this kind of place the scouts went to. To put it bluntly, the scouts did **not** go to a brothel and first engage in sex in order to get information. They went to Rahab's store and motel because it was the most logical place to get information. Travelers would be talking about the concerns of the day.

They also went to this location because **God** directed them there. Sometime in the last few years, Rahab has come to believe in the God of Israel. She wants to follow Him. But she needs more information. God answers by sending the scouts.

God could have overlooked her. After all, she was part of the enemy. She has been a prostitute. Society in her day and culture did not value her in the least. Yet God, in His mercy, is willing to save her and anyone who goes to her house for safety. However the majority of people in Jericho are not going to respond. Because they do not believe in the God of Israel, they do not believe the Jews will win the battle. Only those with faith in the God of Israel will seek refuge in her house.

2. What about Rahab's lie?

As believers, we are commanded, *do not lie to one another* because that is the practice of those who do not follow God. God gives that command because almost all lies are to harm someone, to make ourselves look good or to avoid responsibility. But if a lie is told to protect the life of another, then the reason for God's command is gone. For example

Believing Gentiles during the Holocaust told lies to protect the Jews they were hiding in their homes.

Believers who work for the government in a spy or undercover capacity have to tell lies.

If a criminal breaks into a home, a parent would lie about where they hid the children to protect them.

In the case of Rahab, for several years she had been a secret believer. But now she was ready to openly identify herself with the Jews and their God. She was even willing to risk her life to save theirs. In the New Testament book of James, he is writing the Jews and giving proof of faith thru action. He uses her lie as that proof. Rahab's faith in the God of the Jews was genuine. She proved her faith by hiding the spies and sending them out another way. It was specifically the **lie** that sent them in a different direction.

If she had lied to avoid responsibility or hide a wrong action, it would have been wrong. But since her lie was to protect the lives of God's people, God honored her. From **God's** point of view, her lie was evidence of her faith.

After talking with Rahab, the 2 scouts return and give their report to Joshua.



The Jews are camped on the eastern side of the river and Jericho is on the western side. So Joshua tells the people it is time to cross the Jordan River and enter the land. Most of the year this river is only 100 feet wide and 3 feet deep. It is the place of the fords, where everyone crossed.

However during harvest season, the river would rise to flood stage. It became a mile wide and 10-12 feet deep along with a very swift current. According to Joshua 3:18, right when the Jews are ready to cross, the river is at flood stage. God *could* have brought them to this point at any other time of year, but He chooses flood stage so both the Jews and the Canaanites will again see His power.

God tells some of the Jewish priests to take the ark that represents His presence and go to the edge of the river. At the moment their feet go into the water, He will cut the flow of water from the north. The riverbed will become dry and the people can walk across it. What a test of faith. Because this will be so difficult, God does not ask the people to do it. He sends the spiritual leaders because they have greater knowledge and experience. God requires **them** to act in faith before **He** will do anything more. To the credit of the Jewish priests, they obey and the flow of the river is cut off.

There is a beautiful command that Joshua gives as the people cross the river. One person from each family clan has been chosen to pick up a large rock from the riverbed and take it to the bank on the other side. The 12 stones are then piled together to form a monument. In the future, when people ask what the stones mean, it will be an opportunity to remember and tell what God did for them in the past.

After everyone crosses the Jordan River, they set up camp. God tells Joshua how to conquer the city of Jericho, some 2 - 3 miles south of them. Jericho is a very old city that was under constant attack. Thruout history it was built, destroyed, rebuilt and destroyed some 24 times. Archeology believes that enemies had destroyed the city with a large population some 50 years earlier. Just recently it has been rebuilt and is starting over with a few hundred people along with a small number of children or babies.

Because it is a border town, it is surrounded with a wall 50 feet high in the front and lower on the backside. It is 15 feet thick with houses built into the wall. To walk around it is between 1 and 2 miles.

Think of it as Fort Jericho. Tho small in population, it is a strategic town. Entrance into Jericho means entrance into the entire land. Based on God's instruction, the army marches around the city once a day, for 6 days. They march without talking. Seven priests march with the army and blow ram's horns while other priests carry the ark of God.

On the 7th day, the army marches around the city 7 times. When they finish the last turn, the horns blow, the people shout and the walls fall outward. Only one house on the wall remains standing - the house of Rahab.

She and her family are saved. Later on, Rahab will marry a Jewish man and totally enter into Jewish life. Thru this marriage God will show her even more grace and place her into the family line of Jesus. She ends up being David's great grandmother 5 generations removed. To put it another way, she is 8 generations or 320 years before David. From a pagan Canaanite and prostitute to an ancestor of Jesus. That is grace!

After the walls of Jericho collapse, the army kills the animals and people. They burn the city and all the things in it. This raises major questions. So let's deal with them, one concept at a time. First of all, why do they destroy **everything**?

Joshua 6:17 gives us the answer. *The city and all that is in it are to be devoted to the Lord.* Other translations read, *It is to be set apart for Yahweh, it is under the ban, it is accursed, anathema, doomed or given to the Lord.*

Altho these phrases sound contradictory, they give the combined meanings of the Hebrew word. It was a concept that was used by all Middle East nations. Because Western culture has nothing similar, it is hard to understand. The best translation is *dedicated to God*..

When God gave His laws to the Jews, He said the **first** of everything belonged to Him. It was a way for them to show that everything was from God.

If it was holy, it was given to God thru the Jewish priests.

If it was unholy, it was given to God thru destruction. Things were destroyed by fire.

Jericho is Israel's **first** battle and **first** victory in the Promised Land. This means **it** belongs to God.

Because everything in Jericho is connected with a pagan religion, it is unholy. Therefore it can only be given to God by destroying it. People and animals are destroyed by being killed; structures and things are burned, since fire is what purifies them.

If the army takes anything that belongs to God, then the judgment meant for Jericho will transfer to the army. They will be killed.

We can understand and accept what God does with *things*. But what about the *people* of Jericho?

How can a loving God command all the people to be killed?

It is a reasonable question that needs to be dealt with. The answer comes from both archeology and Scripture.

According to recent archeology, the Canaanite civilization at that time had become one of the weakest, most decadent and immoral cultures of the civilized world. It all revolved around their religion. The focus of their religion was fertility and sex.

Their worship required **prostitution** with male or female priests who were called *holy ones*. It involved both hetero and homosexual activity. Archeology has discovered that sexually transmitted diseases were rampant in their society.

Their religion also required **child sacrifices** for various reasons.

After building a new home, parents had to burn one of their children alive. The ashes or bones were put in or on the cornerstone to keep the evil spirits away.

When the parents wanted something important, they would ask one of their gods for it and promise to sacrifice a child not yet born as payment. If at the time of birth, the baby was born dead, then the baby together with the next youngest child had to be burned as an offering to that god. Infant and child sacrifices were a normal part of life.

In addition, their religion required **sadistic, brutal torture** of their enemies.

This is what **ARCHEOLOGY** tells us about the Canaanites.

Then we have what **GOD** says about the Canaanites and why He is removing them from the land.

In Deuteronomy 9, God said it was because the Canaanite nations were so **evil**.

In Deuteronomy 18, it was because they were using the spirit world and **spirit guides of Satan** to get information and power.

In Leviticus 18, God says He is removing them because of their **sexual sins**. He takes a complete chapter to list all the sins and then says to the Jews...

Do not defile yourselves in any of these sexual ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled. Even the land was defiled; so I punished it for its sin and the land vomited out its inhabitants. Lev. 18:24

But this raises the question,

Did these nations know any better? Did they have information?

The answer is *yes*.

Six to eight hundred years earlier, God promised the land of Canaan to Abraham's descendants. Abraham was to live in the land and even buy land, but he himself could not possess it. God told him the reason was that *the sin of the people was not yet complete*. Genesis 15:16

God would never destroy the Canaanites, take their land and give it to others until they had a fair chance. They needed 3 things: to have knowledge of God
to have knowledge of His standards about right and wrong
to have opportunity to make a choice.

So for some 200 years, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob lived among them to give them knowledge of God.

But after getting that knowledge, the Canaanites rejected it. Instead of getting better, they became worse. Some of Jacob's family started to intermarry with them. So to protect Jacob's family from the corruption and depravity of the land, God sent them to live in Egypt. Over the next 3-400 years the people in Canaan became more and more evil.

When God took the Jews out of Egypt, the people of Canaan once again heard about the power of Yahweh God.

While the Jews wandered in the wilderness, the Canaanites had 40 more years to choose and believe. They all heard what God had done; they all feared.

And then during the 6 days the Jews marched around the city, the people had opportunity to change their mind and go to Rahab's house. But they were unwilling to repent. Everyone heard and *feared*, but only Rahab and her family heard and *followed* the God of Israel.

God has no pleasure in bringing judgment on the wicked. But after 6-800 years, this civilization has willfully rejected Him and become corrupt to the very core. Because their sin is now complete, God takes the land from the Canaanites and gives it to the Jews. But even as He does, He warns His people if they do the same things, they will be destroyed and removed from the land.

But there is still another question.

What about the innocent babies and children?

Various times thruout the Bible, God says when parents sin, their children suffer the consequences to the 3rd and 4th generation. In the time of Joshua, the sexual practices of the Canaanite parents caused the majority of children to be born with genetic damage and sexual diseases. So God commands all to be killed.



To us this seems very inhumane, so let me put it in other terms.

In medicine, when a person develops gangrene in their foot, the doctor has to make a decision. Should he leave the gangrene and let it spread, or stop it by amputating the foot. Which is the most merciful on the part of the doctor?

The depravity and genetic damage in the Canaanite race was like gangrene. Remember, they were at the crossroads of 3 continents with major trade routes going thru their land.

If God lets these people and the land continue in their practices, eventually the depravity and damage will spread thruout the 3 continents of Africa, Asia and Europe. The Jews would be affected; the bloodline of Jesus would be contaminated. God could let that part of the world destroy itself, or He could cut out the **Canaanite** civilization for the protection and preservation of the rest. God removes the Canaanites and puts the Jews in their place so they

can bring blessing in place of suffering.

Also remember, there are only a small number of babies and children involved, because the city had been destroyed by other enemies some 50 years earlier.

In addition, babies and children under the age of accountability are under God's grace. Since they are not old enough to make a choice about God, they will have eternal life with Him. This is what matters the most.

After victory in Jericho, Joshua and the army go to the next town. Everyone assumes there will be another victory, but instead, there is defeat and many soldiers die. The reason is that in the battle at Jericho, one of the soldiers had stolen things that belonged to God. As punishment, the soldier and his **family** are put to death. Once again there is a question.

Since it is the soldier who stole the things, **how can God be fair to punish the whole family?**

Chapter 7 says the soldier hid the goods in the ground inside his tent. When you dig a hole in the ground and put the dirt back, the soil is broken up and is a different color. There is no privacy in a tent. The whole family was aware of what he had done. They also knew that stealing what belonged to God would bring defeat and death to the army in the next battle.

But just before the next battle, instead of going to Joshua and warning him, family members said nothing. Their silence caused the army's defeat and death of the soldiers just as much as the actual theft. Because they were equally guilty, the entire family was punished with death.

As soon as Joshua deals with the disobedience, God's judgment is removed and once again they have victory. Over the next 7 years God's people conquer all the southern area of land and then the northern section. Their goal at this time is only to break the main resistance of the enemy and take possession of the land in general. The land is then assigned among the 12 tribes or family clans.

With this, the army from each clan can fight to claim their own inheritance. Many of the Canaanites are still living and have further opportunity to put their faith in Yahweh God. His mercy is still extended as it had been to Rahab and her family. In the end, the Canaanites are destroyed, not for lack of opportunity, but for refusal to respond to God's mercy.

Joshua completes the ministry God gave him. He then claims his inheritance and enjoys it for the next 15 years. Just before his death at 110, he gathers the people together to review what God had done in the past and to challenge them for the future.

Seven times in chapters 23 he refers to the people that still remain in the land. They are a society that is evil and corrupt. Since the Jews are going to live near them, they (God's people) have to decide if they will follow the ways of God or the ways of the Canaanites. Joshua gave them his final challenge.

But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve. As for me and my household, we will serve the LORD – we choose to serve Yahweh, the God of salvation and relationship.

The stories in Joshua have so many lessons for us. Let me mention 3.

In the Old Testament, Rahab wanted to follow the God of Israel and God sent 2 scouts directly to her house to give her knowledge.

In our day, the moment a person begins to seek the God of the Bible, it does not matter who they are, what they have done, or their geographical location. God will stop at nothing to see they get information and opportunity to believe. Thruout the world, in our day, God is responding in unbelievable ways to those who want to know about Him. God will **always** answer a seeking heart.

In the Old Testament, after the Jews crossed the Jordan River they built a monument of stones to remind them what God had done.

When God answers our prayer, provides a need or brings change to someone's life, we should create some kind of monument to remind us what God has done. It can be anything that is visual and physical - a piece of wood, a plant, stone or picture - anything that will remind us of the occasion.

Later on, if we go thru a difficult time and get discouraged we can look at the monument and remember what God did in the past. It will encourage us to say, *As He helped me in the past, I believe He will help me in the situation I have now.* God uses monuments to strengthen our faith and remind us of His faithfulness.

The people in Joshua's day had to decide whether to follow society around them or to follow God.

In our day, we face the same decision. God has given His standard of right and wrong in Scripture. He has shown us His values and has described the style of life He wants from His people.

But society tells us we should follow the world's standards of right and wrong, its values and style of life.

Because society has become so evil and corrupt, it opposes all that is godly.

As members of God's family, we have to make a choice. In our words and actions, our decisions, entertainment and friends, are we going to follow the ways of God or the ways of society? Choose this day whom **you** will serve!