

CLOUD OF WITNESSES | 11:: Joshua

PRAYER: As always, I hope you've found your comfy spot, your journal, and your pen and have taken a moment to pause and spend with Jesus. If you haven't yet, consider thanking Him for everything He's taught you during this series. Thank Him for doing the impossible. For always fighting for us. For being sovereign and working in all things for our good and His glory. Thank Him for always being with us, through the Holy Spirit, and for guiding us into truth and Godliness. Tell Him how great He is to you, whatever comes to mind. Then invite Him to sit with you and express how much you want to hear from Him and ask Him to speak to you as you study His word today.

Maybe write this prayer in your journal, so you can go back and remember what you've prayed and see how the Lord showed up in your time together.



Alright girls! We're on the home stretch. This post and one more and we have finished our first series together!

Today, we're looking at the story of Joshua and how the Lord used him to lead the Israelites into the promised land. Before we get to Hebrews 11, though, let's dig into Joshua's past and see where he started.

READ THE VERSES IN THE CHART BELOW THEN RECORD WHAT EACH VERSE TELLS US ABOUT JOSHUA:

VERSES	WHO IS JOSHUA?	WHAT MIRACULOUS EVENTS HAD HE WITNESSED?
Exodus 17:8-13		
Exodus 24:12-13		
Exodus 33:7-11		
Numbers 11:28		
Numbers 13:1-2 & 13:16		



Joshua enters the scene in Exodus, and while we don't get a lot of his background story like we do with our other patriarchs, we do get a wonderful picture of his "resume" when it came to serving the Lord. He started out at a young age as Moses' aide – and as you saw in the scriptures you just read, he got to witness a lot of miraculous, Holy events. At this point, I think of him like an intern. He was learning the ropes and didn't have a big role to play in most cases. But while he may have only been a witness, each moment was stirring his faith in the God of Jacob.

His faith would prove to be an important asset as the group moved closer to the promised land. Let's see how this plays out.

FLIP TWO BOOKS OVER FROM EXODUS AND READ NUMBERS 13:1-21. IN THIS PASSAGE, WHAT WERE JOSHUA AND THE OTHER SPIES TASKED TO DO? WHY DO YOU THINK GOD ASKED MOSES TO SEND SPIES INTO THE LAND?

Eventually, the Lord brought the Israelites to the land of Canaan and asked Moses to send spies into the land. This wasn't because God needed a spy, nor was it to see if He could overtake the people who lived there. This was a *test of faith*. Notice in chapter 13, verse 2, God says "Send some men to explore the land of Canaan, which *I am giving to the Israelites*." Done deal. He wasn't sending them to see *if* they could take the land, He was sending them to see *what it was like*!

God instructed Moses to select one spy from each tribe – the 12 tribes of Israel that came from the 12 sons of Jacob – this was fitting, because each of them would get a piece of the land, so they each sent a representative to scope it out. We see our faithful friend, Joshua, made the list – and we also see that Joshua actually received a name change... a foreshadow of things to come, maybe?

NOW, READ NUMBERS 13:21-33 AND 14:1-10. WAS THE LAND JUST AS GOD PROMISED? WHAT IS THE GENERAL CONSENSUS FROM THE GROUP ON THE LAND? HOW DO JOSHUA + CALEB REACT TO WHAT THEY'VE SEEN? HOW DO YOU THINK JOSHUA'S FAITH PLAYS A ROLE IN HIS REACTION?

All 12 spies saw the same territory. They all saw the vines with large clusters of grapes. They all saw the established towns and the fertile farmland. They all saw the Amalekites



and the Hittites and the other inhabitants of Canaan. But the difference was *fear* and *faith*. In his Bible commentary, William Macdonald explains, "Ten of the spies had the wrong perspective. They saw themselves as the inhabitants of Canaan saw them (like grasshoppers). Joshua and Caleb saw Israel from God's point of view: well able to conquer the land. To the ten unbelieving spies the problem of giants was insurmountable. To the two believing spies the presence of giants was insignificant."¹

Isn't that how fear affects us too? Fear says, "You can't do this." Faith says, "I can do all things *through Christ* who strengthens me." Fear says, "This will never happen." Faith says, "*With God*, all things are possible." Fear says, "God might come through for other people, but He *definitely* won't come through for you." Faith says, "God is for me, loves me, and has good plans for me."

When we stare at the circumstance, fear sets in. And when fear comes to stay, it invites bitterness to come along and camp out too. And then bitterness starts to unpack and anger and grumbling pop out of his suitcase. The only way to combat fear is to switch our focus. When we keep our eyes on the Lord, our faith grows. When we believe that God is able, that He gives us His strength, that He loves us and plans His best for us, our problems don't go away, but we realize that God is way bigger than our problems and will help us through the storm. And, whatever God has purposed for us to do, we will be able to do – despite any hurdles we may face.

Just because Joshua and Caleb had a positive outlook on Canaan doesn't mean that land *wasn't* full of enemies that could crush them. It just means that they trusted God was able to do as He promised and give them the land, despite the presence of enemies.

We pick up again on Joshua's story several years later – for context, this is 40 years from the time the Israelites left Egypt and had crossed the Red Sea. As you can imagine, lots had happened during that time – even more than we read in the scriptures above.

READ JOSHUA 1. IN YOUR JOURNAL, LIST ALL OF THE PROMISES THAT GOD GAVE TO JOSHUA. STAR ANY THAT SOUND FAMILIAR.

Moses had passed away before the Israelites reached the promised land and God selected Joshua to lead His people. All the years Joshua spent shadowing Moses planted in him a deep-rooted faith in God. The depth of his faith led to trust and his trust led to obedience. In return, God knew He could trust Joshua to follow His lead – and what a big task was ahead! One lesson to be learned, here, is when we prove to be faithful with small things, the Lord entrusts us with bigger things.



After God describes the land, He would soon give Israel, He gives Joshua a bit of a pep talk.

IN JOSHUA 1:6-9, GOD EXPLAINS HOW ISRAEL SHOULD TAKE THE LAND BEFORE THEM. RE-READ THE PASSAGE AND THEN LIST GOD'S COMMANDS. PUT A STAR NEXT TO THE COMMAND GOD REPEATS.

"Be strong and very courageous." – it's a portion of a Bible verse you can find on necklaces and mugs and little wooden signs everywhere. But when these words were originally spoken, Joshua and the Lord were facing a very heavy moment. It's like God was leaning down and gently grabbing Joshua by the shoulders and looking in his eyes saying, "Son, you're about to face a very hard thing. Be strong and very courageous. I'm going to lead you as you go through these many battles, so trust Me. Lean on Me. We will get through this together. There won't be a moment that I'm not with you. If you obey My commands, we've got this." Just because the Lord promised to give the land to Israel, doesn't mean the other people groups would just "poof" disappear. There was still much work to do in the form of strategy and battle.

William Macdonald writes, "The size and duration of the task ahead, the pressures of leading such an obstinate people, and the absence of his spiritual mentor, Moses, were perhaps heavy on Joshua's mind at the time. But the Lord was not calling him without enabling him. There were good reasons for Joshua to be strong: God's promise, a sure victory; God's Word, a safe guide; God's presence, a sustaining power."¹

We may never face battle, unless one day some of us join the military, but it is guaranteed that all of us will face hard things. We'll have seasons of joy and seasons of sorrow. We'll have seasons of abundance and seasons of drought. We'll have successes and failures, sickness and health. That's why people need to be reminded to "be strong and very courageous." But the rest of the promise is there, too, for those who know the Lord. When we have the Holy Spirit in our lives, we can rest in the fact that just like with Joshua, God will *also* never leave nor forsake us. And He will fight for us, too.

Beyond the call to be strong and courageous, God gave Joshua several other commands. Remember the study we did on Joseph a few posts back? We read Joshua 1:7-8 and here it is again – the call to obey and the promise of success. Israel's success hinged upon their obedience to the Lord. There were going to be so many pivotal moments for Israel in the coming years. They had to rely on God for every step. Sometimes they succeeded, other times they failed – and it all depended on whether or not they did things their own way or the Lord's way. The same is true for us. We will have many pivotal moments in our lives and for each one, the best thing we can do – and the first thing we should do – is reach out to



the Lord, ask Him to guide us, and then do what He says.

Moving right along, we reach the point that the city of Jericho enters the story. Now, Jericho was a fortified city in the land of Canaan – the first on the list for God to conquer. In Joshua 2, we get a glimpse inside the city walls.

READ JOSHUA 2. HOW WERE THE PEOPLE OF THE CITY FEELING ABOUT ISRAEL'S IMPENDING TAKEOVER?

Here we see Joshua sent spies ahead to scope out the city. This was a more specific mission than the first. Rather than scope out all of Canaan, here, they were to focus on Jericho. In the city, the spies met a woman named Rahab who lived in a home conveniently attached to the city walls. Did you catch what she said in verses 8-11? Word had spread far and wide that God had parted the Red Sea for Israel and that Israel had completely destroyed two Amorite kingdoms east of the Jordan. The Canaanites were frightened Israel would attack them too. Their eyes and hearts were closed to the spiritual side, and all they saw was this nation with crazy “mystical power” coming after everyone around them. But Rahab heard these things about Israel and believed. She accredited all of the miraculous wonders and victories to God – a God who was not part of her culture.

Let's pause and discuss this a second, because I think there's an important lesson to be learned, here.

FILL OUT THE CHART BELOW WITH THE FACTS AND OUTCOMES OF EACH SPY MISSION:

ASSIGNMENT	WHAT INFORMATION DID THEY GATHER?	WHAT WAS THE SPIES' CONCLUSION ON THE LAND?
12 Spies into Canaan		
2 Spies into Jericho		



Notice there's no mention that the first set of spies talked with anyone in the land of Canaan. All we know is that they took produce from the land. This lack of interaction left a lot of room for assumptions. In the second, and more focused exploration assignment, the two spies heard first-hand from Rahab that, contrary to popular belief, the Canaanites were actually incredibly scared of Israel and their God.

TAKE A MOMENT TO WRITE ABOUT A TIME THAT YOU ASSUMED SOMETHING AND LET THAT FALSE ASSUMPTION DICTATE YOUR ACTIONS. HOW DID IT TURN OUT?

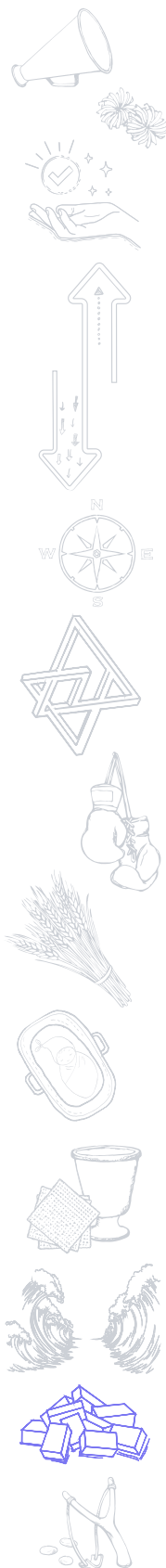
This happens a lot – and I'm guilty of it too. Sometimes seeking out the truth is scarier than the security of our own thoughts. But, be encouraged that the *best thing* to do when you're confused or tempted to assume is to seek the truth. That might be to directly speak with someone, it might mean to seek advice from a parent or a Godly mentor, and it might look like praying about it. I'll tell you one of the greatest tools I have in my spiritual toolbox is this prayer that a Bible Study leader shared with me a decade ago. It's simple: "Lord, please reveal the truth to me." God is the God of Truth. He will choose if and what He reveals, but more times than not, I get a crazy answer. Random things come out of the woodwork when I pray this prayer – things I'd never expect. And a lot of times, its information that helps me move forward.

Now that Joshua received that much-needed intel, it was time to move ahead.

READ JOSHUA 3:7-17 AND JOSHUA 4:19-24. WHAT IS DIFFERENT BETWEEN THE EXPERIENCE IN THIS PASSAGE AND THE TIME GOD SPLIT THE RED SEA?

You may recognize the excerpt from Joshua 4 from the last post. Here, we see it in context a bit more. The Lord did this miracle for several reasons. First, He wanted to lift Joseph high in the eyes of all Israel, so they would know that the Lord was leading them through Joseph, just as He did with Moses. Second, He would use this to give Israel faith that God was among *them* and that He would certainly drive out the current inhabitants of the land. This would also bring back memories of crossing the Red Sea and would be something new for younger Israelites to experience.

They would have heard the stories and now they would get to experience it for themselves. This time, however, instead of Moses' staff, God would use the Spirit of the Lord to part the waters. We skipped over the passages that introduced the Ark of the Covenant, so we'll



definitely need to study that in the future. Essentially, Israel didn't have the blessing of the Holy Spirit living in their individual hearts. Instead, God's dwelling place was the Ark of the Covenant.

Just as the Israelites who left Egypt were guided by pillars of cloud and fire, the Lord went ahead of this group in the Ark. The priests carried the Ark of the Covenant into the Jordan river, and it parted the second their feet hit the water. In Chapter 4, we see that Israel made it to the foot of Jericho and camped in a place called Gilgal. Joshua brought the 12 stones from the river with them as a reminder of everything God had done.

READ JOSHUA 5:10-12. WHAT FAMILIAR TRADITION DO WE SEE BEING OBSERVED IN THIS TEXT? WHAT WAS SPECIAL ABOUT THAT PARTICULAR YEAR FOR THE ISRAELITES? WHAT CHARACTERISTIC OF GOD WAS ALREADY SHINING THROUGH BECAUSE OF THIS?

Think about it. These people had been wandering in the desert for *forty years* – and it's not because they were walking, and Canaan was that far away from Egypt. No. They had wandered partially because of their continued disobedience to God but, in His grace, the Lord took this time to draw them to Himself and create new layers in their relationship with Him. All along, though, God knew the promise He made to Abraham and had passed down through generations. Just before the Lord faithfully fulfilled His promise to the Hebrew people, He reinstated the tradition of Passover. It had been forgotten while they wandered in the desert, but the Passover was a reminder of their redemption from Egypt. This year, though, was different because now, they were at the foot of the promised land and were able to enjoy its harvest.

READ JOSHUA 5:13-15. WHO DID JOSHUA SEE? WHAT IS INTERESTING ABOUT THEIR INTERACTION?

Just before "battle," Joshua looks up and all of a sudden, he sees a Soldier. When Joshua asked who's side the Soldier was on, He responded, "Neither." God doesn't pick sides (as we'll see again, here, soon), but He chose the Hebrew people to be His and consequently they would be the ones to fight in His battles. Sometimes their participation would be high, sometimes they'd merely be spectators.

The other interesting thing is that the Soldier introduced Himself as "the Commander of the army of the Lord." Bible scholars debate on who this man was. Some think it was God in human form. Others think it could be Christ preincarnate – meaning, Jesus before He was



born. Still others hypothesize the soldier could have been an angel – it’s happened before. I don’t know about you, but I’m going with the idea that it was Jesus. He is the Commander of His armies and what He asked of Joshua – to take off his sandals “because he was standing on holy ground” – is exactly what God, through the burning bush, asked Moses to do when He first called *him* to service. And like Israel, we get to participate in the battles that He calls us to. We’re in the Lord’s army!

One commentator noted, “The ‘man’ in verse 13 was the Angel of Jehovah – the Lord Jesus in one of His preincarnate appearances. He introduced Himself as the Commander of the army of the Lord. Christ does not come merely to help us, and certainly not to harm us; He comes to take *full control*.” ¹ And isn’t that the truth? Our lives are a tug of war on who gets control. But when Jesus shows up and we see Him for who He is, we completely surrender to His authority – the authority that is over all Heaven and Earth.

The commentator continues, “[Verse 15 gives] ...conclusive proof that Joshua was in the presence of God and knew it. Mere angels never accepted worship, but here the Angel of the Lord *commands* worship, thereby proving His divine nature. Joshua must learn firsthand what Moses had to learn at the beginning of his ministry – the holiness and supremacy of the Lord.” ¹

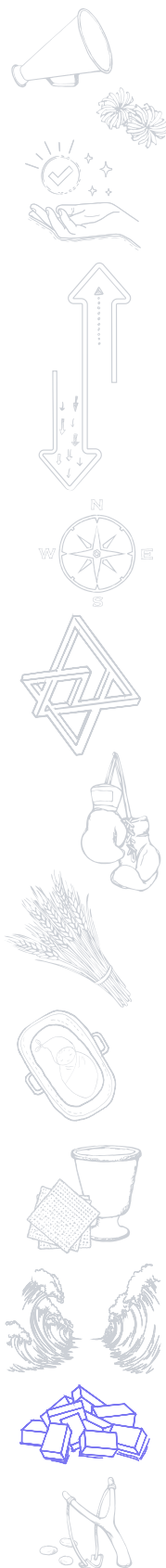
Turn the page to the next chapter, and it’s time for “battle.” Except, this battle would look like no other.

READ JOSHUA 6. IN YOUR JOURNAL, LIST ANY PECULIAR FACTS YOU READ ABOUT THIS BATTLE.

Hang in there with me, there is a lot of interesting detail in this passage. But first I want to point out verse 1. The people of Jericho were so frightened of Israel, they barricaded themselves into the city! Have you ever seen a movie with a castle that had stone walls around it and a moat with a drawbridge? This is how I picture the city of Jericho, minus the moat – we’re in the desert, people! Anyway, Joshua faced a wall. The first portion of the promised land was inside, and he had to count on God to take that wall down.

In life, we’ll also face a lot of walls. We’ll face emotional walls that are thrown up by friends – in which case, some vulnerability needs to happen for us to come in. We’ll face mental walls and find it difficult to learn a particular subject or skill – in which case, we need to have a breakthrough for the walls to come down. We’ll face our own walls of anxiety and depression that keep us inside. In each case, God is the One who can tear those walls down! Keep steady in prayer, just like the Israelites circling that city. Bring your prayers to God every day. Keep circling and I promise you’ll eventually see a miracle.

Secondly, did you notice how the Lord commanded that they march around the city once for *six days* and on the 7th day march around the city seven times? There’s significance to



that. I told you God likes numbers!

CAN YOU THINK OF ANOTHER FAMOUS MOMENT IN BIBLE HISTORY THAT HAD A SERIES OF 7 DAYS?

If you guessed creation, you're right! You see, this journey from the 1st day to the 7th day is reminiscent of the creation story in Genesis: 6 days of work with the 7th and final day of rest.² The 7th day in this story concludes in rest because in Deuteronomy, the Lord calls the promised land Israel's rest - their "Nuakh" (pronounced, "New-Ahh" with a little grit at the end).

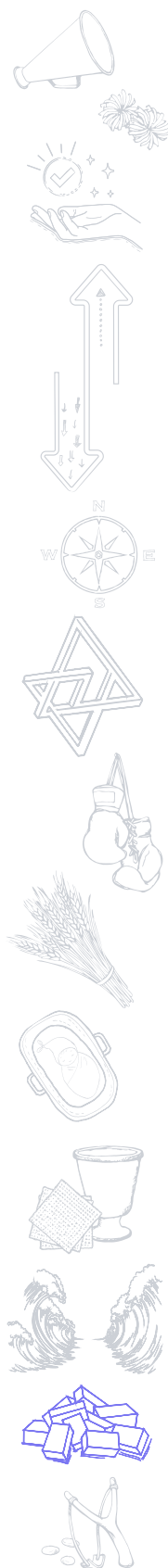
Deuteronomy 12:9-10 says:

"...you have not yet reached the resting place and the inheritance the Lord your God is giving you. But you will cross the Jordan and settle in the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, and He will give you rest from all your enemies around you so that you will live in safety." (NIV)

The word Nuakh means to rest or to settle in. Nuakh was first introduced in the book of Genesis after God created Adam. Genesis 2:8 says, "Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there He put the man He had formed." The word translated "put" is the Hebrew word Nuakh. Eden was supposed to be a place where God and man could "settle in" and live life together. But we all know the story: Adam and Eve took the forbidden fruit and brought sin into the world. So, this starts a repeating narrative in the Old Testament of God's people getting so close to the concept of "7th day rest" – resting in God, trusting and obeying Him, being in communion with Him – that it builds a sense of expectation in the reader – *will they get it right this time?* But something always goes terribly wrong.³ Reading these stories one after the other highlights the fact that man wrestles with evil, always falling short of God's requirement of holiness and this idea of resting with God becomes a distant hope³ – one that can only be fulfilled in Jesus.

With all this in mind, we can see that the schedule for the Battle of Jericho was no coincidence. Beyond that, it builds this anticipation, waiting to see what God will do. Can you imagine? Day 1: walking around the city, blowing their horns. Day 2: same thing. Walking around the city, blowing their horns. Day 3... Day 4... Day 5... Day 6... Day 7 and its victories come only after they've waited. And on the 7th day, they can rest in their new land. This would be an easy victory. "God is the One who will deliver His people, Israel simply needed to trust and wait."⁴

Additionally, commentators explain that when we read of this "linear journey" from 1 to 7 in the Bible, the story is about God freeing His people from death and darkness into completeness with Him. For the Israelites, the darkness was a forty-year journey through



the desert. It was a new type of slavery – not slavery to Egypt, but slavery to their own disobedience and the desire to do their own thing.⁵ God is the same yesterday, today and forever – He is still freeing hearts from slavery to sin and inviting us into complete communion with Him.

Wait. Trust. Rest. Do you see the symbolism pointing to your own life? Like Israel, we all have been slaves to our own sin (John 8:34). Because of our sin, we circle around in a spiritual desert waiting for “rest” – or communion with God. Jesus is our rest (Hebrews 4). Because of His sacrifice, those who believe can have complete communion with God. It is a gift we don’t have to earn.

Isaiah 30:15 says, “In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength...” See that? Our strength is in quietness and trust – as in, giving full control of our lives to Jesus. Our salvation is in repenting from our sins and resting in the work He did on the cross. It’s all connected.

READ HEBREWS 11:30-31. WHAT TWO ACTS OF FAITH ARE LISTED IN THESE VERSES?

I love this quote from William Macdonald: “The faith that brought the walls down [and let Israel in] also brought Rahab and her relatives out.”¹ Rahab’s faith unleashed the God’s grace upon her life – not only did He spare her, but true to “abundantly more than we can ask or imagine” form, He used her to continue the family line that would eventually lead to King David and then to Jesus.

The fate of the rest of the city is a picture of God’s wrath and judgement of the wicked. Historical studies of the city of Jericho have led to the belief that it was once the center of worship to a moon-god. As the city burned down, God was destroying idol worship and the corruption that goes along with it.⁶ But don’t think God’s grace wasn’t offered to the people of Jericho. For six days, the presence of the Lord circled the city and priests blew their horns announcing His arrival. Can you imagine the spectacle? Did no one notice? It had to grab *someone’s* attention! Then, on Day 7, God’s grace abounded much more, as He commanded the group to circle the town seven times, drawing even more attention to Himself. During that time, the inhabitants had the opportunity to surrender and claim belief in God, but we don’t read of anyone who came forward. Therefore, the whole city (except Rahab and her family) were placed under the curse of death – a penalty we all deserve for our sin.

The symbolism of a city burnt to the ground is also profound: Everything was to be made new. It’s a picture of our own lives, isn’t it? The Lord moves in and makes all things new. He cleans out all the old junk that is from the flesh and He makes a new creature in us.



It's easy to read all these miraculous stories and think this was all just normal stuff back then, but everything we've studied this entire series took faith. Be encouraged! God is still working. God still does miracles. And this passage of scripture is a wonderful reminder that the Lord fulfills His promises – no matter how long it takes.



DIG A LITTLE DEEPER:

- * How has the Lord shown you grace and faithfulness?
- * Open your bible or use Bible Gateway's multi-passage lookup tool to read the verses below. List what each of these verses explain of how God is intimately connected with the truth. How do these verses say we benefit from knowing the truth? How is this encouraging to you in your own faith journey?

[1 Corinthians 14:33](#) |

[John 8:31-32](#) |

[John 16:13](#) |

[Proverbs 3:5-8 \(Message Version\)](#) |



- * Is there anything in your life right now that you could pray “Lord, reveal the truth to me?” Take some time to write a prayer in your journal asking Jesus for guidance.

- * In the last post (Moses + the Red Sea) we studied **Exodus 14:14** which says “...the Lord will fight for you, you only need to be still.” In this post, we learned a bit more about resting with **Isaiah 30:15**. How can you apply this principle of rest to your life? Is there anything you need to lay down at the feet of Jesus? Is there anything from which you need rest?



- * Joshua faced walls that needed to come down and he understood that the Lord would fight for him. Are you facing anything in your own life that feels like a towering wall you need to break through? Write about it in your journal and then read **Philippians 4:6-7**. What does Paul say to do when we are anxious? What will God do in return? How do Paul's instructions in these verses encourage you?

- * BONUS – Listen to “Do It Again” by Elevation Worship. What do the lyrics say about God? With that in mind, how does this song encourage you as you wait and trust in the Lord?

Reference Notes

- ¹ William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary 2nd Edition*, 2016
- ² Bible Project Podcast, “Design Patterns in the Bible, Live from Milpitas! Part 2”, 2018
- ³ Bible Project Podcast, “The Significance of 7 - 7th Day Rest E2”, 2019
- ⁴ Bible Project, Joshua Overview Video
- ⁵ Bible Project Podcast, “Seventy Times Seven - Prophetic Math - 7th Day Rest E10”, 2019
- ⁶ Zondervan, *NIV Study Bible*, 2002

