



**Mustard Seed Sunday School Lesson for September 24, 2006
Released on September 20, 2006**

"Making the Right Choice" Joshua 24:1, 14-24

GOLDEN TEXT: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15).

SCRIPTURE LESSON TEXT:

And Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God.

Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods;

For the LORD our God, he it is that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed:

And the LORD drove out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt in the land: therefore will we also serve the LORD; for he is our God.

And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the LORD: for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.

If ye forsake the LORD, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good.

And the people said unto Joshua, Nay; but we will serve the LORD.

And Joshua said unto the people, Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the LORD, to serve him. And they said, We are witnesses.

Now therefore put away, said he, the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the LORD God of Israel.

And the people said unto Joshua, The LORD our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey.

LESSON OBJECTIVES:

This week's lesson teaches the importance of choices. The lesson will stress the right choices made by Israel under Joshua's leadership and encourage each of us to examine our own commitment to serving God.

LESSON BACKGROUND:

After the children of Israel were delivered from their bondage in Egypt, Moses led the people for more than 40 years. Under Moses' leadership, this former slave people entered into a covenant relationship with God and began their journey toward the land that God had promised them. The journey of this nation to Canaan was delayed by a 40-year period of wandering in

the desert (Numbers 14:33, 34). Following this period, Moses died at the age of 120 years, and the responsibility of leadership fell to Joshua (Numbers 27:15-23).

Joshua's leadership was validated again and again as the Lord promised to be with him as He was with Moses (Joshua 1:5). Joshua miraculously led the nation across the Jordan River when it was in flood stage (Joshua 3), conquered Jericho (Joshua 6) and the rest of Canaan, and divided the conquered land among the tribes of Israel.

INSIGHT FOR THE TEACHER:

One of the biggest struggles faced by our children is peer pressure. For them to take a stand against what friends and other children are doing has to be among the most difficult choices they will face during their lives (or will at least seem so at the time). We all want to be accepted by others, and this may lead us to sometime make wrong choices. Committing ourselves to God's purposes can be greatly influenced by the decisions that we see others making.

The Israelites faced similar situations as they struggled to keep the covenant established with God. Over and over again, the Israelites were distracted by the other nations around them and seemed to forget what God had done for them and from where He had brought them. Israel gave in repeatedly to the pressures around them and made wrong choices.

Let's encourage our children and others to always remember God's goodness. Just like Israel, we can overcome any failures and turn back to God. If necessary, take an honest look at where you are in your relationship with Christ and make the right choices to recommit to God and His purposes. Let's help those under our instruction to do the same. Let's look beyond our own generation and ensure that the next is grounded in their faith and committed to serving the Lord God.

TELLING THE LESSON:

This week's lesson begins with a national gathering of the Israelites for the purpose of covenant renewal and rededication. Joshua called all the tribes of Israel together in the city of Shechem (pronounced SHEE-kem) and challenged the tribal leadership (elders, judges and officers) to be faithful to God – knowing that without godly leadership the nation would be lost.

Explain the significance of the gathering in the city of Shechem. (Joshua 24:1)

Shechem is the first place in Canaan where Abraham had built an altar to the Lord and is where the promise of the land was made for Abraham's descendants (Genesis 12:6,7). The history of Israel also indicates that Jacob also built an altar at Shechem upon his return to the land with his family (Genesis 33:18-20). At the beginning of the conquest of Canaan, Joshua had also assembled the nation in this vicinity after conquering Jericho and Ai (Joshua 8:30-35) – the town of Shechem was immediately to the west of two mountains that the people gathered on for a ceremony of covenant renewal after first entering the promised land. Being in this historical place, especially for the older leaders who participated in the first ceremony with Joshua, would have brought back many memories. Shechem would have had special meaning to those assembled and would have produced memories of their spiritual heritage.

What choices did Joshua present to the people of Israel? (Joshua 24:14-15)

The Israelites were to choose whom they would worship and serve – the Lord God, the gods that some of their ancestors worshiped, or the gods of the land of Canaan. Joshua instructed the people to make their choice, and if they chose to serve God then they should do it in sincerity and in truth.

It seems unbelievable that even after experiencing all the wonders of God and the miraculous acts of provision and deliverance, there were still those among this covenant people who still worshiped idols. There were those who worshiped and served the Lord God, but there were

still those who worshiped the idol gods their ancestors did before the Flood and in Egypt, and still there were others who had turned to the gods of the people in their new land.

What was Joshua's personal choice? (Joshua 24:15)

Joshua announced his own personal decision to the people. He chose to serve the Lord God. Joshua made his decision based on the experiences of his life and God's dealing with Israel. Joshua had declared earlier to the people that not one of God's promises had failed (Joshua 23:14) and, because of this, the only choice that made sense was to serve the Lord God. Joshua declared that he and his household would serve the Lord.

What did the people choose to do? (Joshua 24:16-18)

The people of Israel agreed that God had done wonderful things for them and made the same choice as Joshua. Serving other gods did not make sense when presented with Joshua's reason and example. The leaders of the tribes even expressed their own account of God's miraculous dealings with the nation. They remembered the deliverance from bondage in Egypt, signs and wonders, provision and preservation during their journey to the Promised Land, and the miraculous conquest of Canaan. Faced with this evidence, they declared that they would serve the Lord.

What final warnings and instructions did Joshua give the people? (Joshua 24:19-24)

Joshua reminded the people that the Lord is a holy and jealous God and would not tolerate them serving other gods. Their actions would have to be in line with their decision to serve God or He would punish them for their disobedience. God would not continue to bless them if they disobeyed Him. Joshua warned that disobedience would break the covenant and bring difficulties to them.

After affirming that they would serve the Lord, Joshua instructed the people to get rid of the strange gods (idols) that they still had among them and turn their hearts to the Lord God of Israel.

TELLING HOW TO LIVE:

Read Joshua 24:15. Joshua presented choices to the Israelites – choose to serve the Lord God, the gods their ancestors served before the Flood and in Egypt, or the gods served by the people in Canaan. Joshua had already determined that he and his family would serve the Lord God.

What about you? If you were in the crowd that day, what would your choice have been? Would you have made a decision based on what others chose? What is your choice today?

Discuss how the following occasions offer opportunity for us to renew our covenant with Christ: attendance at Sunday worship, observing a new believer being baptized into Christ, participating in the observance of the Lord's Supper (communion), approaching God in prayer, contributing financially to your local church, and using your gifts and talents in ministry for Christ.

EXPLAINING THE GOLDEN TEXT:

"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Joshua 24:15).

Every person must decide whether or not he or she will serve God. Will you promise to obey God, or will you disobey? The choice is yours. Everyone must make his/her own choice.

At the end of Joshua's leadership of Israel, he met with the people on an important matter. He challenged them to serve and obey God. Joshua had made his choice to obey God, and his choice did not depend on the other people's choice. He decided to serve God even if no one

else did. Joshua took a definite stand for God, regardless of others' decisions. He set an example for us to follow. It is not always easy to obey God. Ask God to help you obey. Choose to do what is right!

PRAYER:

Dear God, thank you for your promises and allowing us the chance to worship and serve you. Thank you for being with us and directing our steps. Help us to obey you and to do your will. Help us to make the right choices today and everyday, in the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen.

ANTICIPATING NEXT WEEK'S LESSON:

Next week's lesson will show that God sent leaders to help His people obey. The lesson is entitled "God Sent Leaders for the People" and Scripture lesson text is Judges 2:16-23. In addition to the scripture lesson text, suggested Bible readings for the week of September 25 are: Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (Love the Lord); Psalm 78:1-8 (God and the Hebrew People); Psalm 85:4-13 (Prayer for a Nation); Judges 2:1-5 (Israel Disobeys God); Judges 2:6-10 (A New Generation); Judges 2:11-15 (Israel Abandons God)

Lesson Summarized By:

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Lesson Activity: Test Your Knowledge (Joshua 24:1, 14-24)

Age Group: Grade 4 and older or advanced readers in younger children
Unscramble the following words to answer the questions.

**EVNOCNAT
AUSHOJ
AAACNN
VRESE**

**LEWVTE
OCSHOE
ECMHSE
OVCIE**

**UHTRT
YGTPE**

1. Who was the person to lead the children of Israel after Moses died?

2. This is a promise or an agreement between two people. _____
3. " ..._____ you this day whom ye will serve..." (Joshua 24:15).
4. Part of Israel's testimony is that God delivered them from the bondage that they endured in this land. _____
5. Joshua led Israel into this Promised Land. _____
6. How many tribes of people was Israel divided into? _____
7. "...As for me and my house, we will _____ the Lord" (Joshua 24:15).
8. Joshua told the people to serve the Lord God "in sincerity and in _____" (Joshua 24:14).
9. "And the people said unto Joshua, The Lord our God will we serve, and his _____ will we obey" (Joshua 24:24).
10. This city was the gathering place for Joshua's final instructions to the Israelites and their renewal of the covenant with God. _____

Lesson Activity: Coloring Activity

Age Group: Appropriate for Ages 4-6

(Source: Children OT Studies – Lesson 55 from www.higherpraise.com)

55. JOSHUA BECOMES ISRAEL'S NEW LEADER
(JOSHUA 1)



*"According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee:
only the LORD thy God be with thee, as he was with Moses."*

JOSHUA 1:17

Lesson Activity: Personal Evaluation (Joshua 24:1, 14-24)

Age Group: Older children and teens (teacher should determine appropriateness of activity)

It is a good practice for God’s people to take an honest look at where they are in their relationship with God and to do this often. Use the diagram below to help you see where you stand with God and to help you commit to God or renew your commitment to serve God.

Are you in the family of God and have committed to love and serve Him?

(Follow the path below based on your answer to the above question)

YES

NO

List the ways that you are currently serving God. 1. 2. 3. 4.	If you do not know how to become a part of God’s family, then talk to your parents, your Sunday School teacher or your Pastor.
List other things that you think you should be doing to serve God? 1. 2. 3. 4.	I must do the following to be a part of God’s family:
Renew your commitment to God and continue to use your gifts and talents to serve the Lord Jesus.	I will commit to love and serve God. The following are ways that I will serve God: 1. 2. 3. 4.