

Adult Unit I: From Nomadic Tribes to Settled People
Adult Title: Radical Commitment to God's Way
Adult Topic: Do Not Conform to the World

Lesson 5: October 4, 2026

Devotional Reading: Jeremiah 31:27-34
Adult Background Scripture: Joshua 23-24
Adult Print Passage: Joshua 24:18-27

Home Daily Bible Reading

Sept 28	M	Joshua 23:1-11	Hold Fast to the Lord
Sept 29	T	Joshua 24:1-13	Reaffirming the Covenant
Sept 30	W	1 John 1:8-2:5	Obey Christ's commandments
Oct 1	Th	Luke 9:57-62	No Turning Back
Oct 2	F	Matthew 22:34-40	The Greatest Commandments
Oct 3	Sa	Psalms 25:12-22	God, Redeem Your People
Oct 4	Su	Joshua 24:18-27	We Will Serve the Lord

EXALT!

Invocation – Teacher or Learner

Celebration – "Saviour, Like a Shepherd Lead Us!" - #278 AME Zion Bicentennial Hymnal

Declaration – Joshua 24:18-27 (*Read together by class, by a volunteer or responsively.*)

¹⁸ and the Lord drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the Lord, for he is our God."

¹⁹ But Joshua said to the people, "You cannot serve the Lord, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. ²⁰ If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm and consume you, after having done you good."

²¹ And the people said to Joshua, "No, we will serve the Lord!" ²² Then Joshua said to the people, "You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the Lord, to serve him." And they said, "We are witnesses." ²³ He said, "Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel." ²⁴ The people said to Joshua, "The Lord our God we will serve, and him we will obey." ²⁵ So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day and made statutes and ordinances for them at Shechem. ²⁶ Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and he took a large stone and set it up there under

the oak in the sanctuary of the Lord.²⁷ Joshua said to all the people, "See, this stone shall be a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the Lord that he spoke to us; therefore it shall be a witness against you if you deal falsely with your God."

ENGAGE: (5-10 min.)

Unit II Synopsis

Unit II, Lacking Leadership and a Moral Compass. Judges is a difficult book in the Bible. After Joshua warns the Israelites to stay true to their faith and remember their identity, the people fall into apostasy, seemingly forgetting Joshua's warning. The Israelites recognize their sinful ways, repent, and call on God when trouble ensues. As soon as God intervenes, they turn away. Lesson 6 addresses the cyclical pattern of apostasy, repentance, and divine rescue that repeats throughout the Book of Judges and is exemplified in Chapter 2. Lesson 7 shows God's faithfulness in raising leaders despite Israel's unfaithfulness (Judges Chapter 3). Lesson 8 demonstrates the book's theme, "everyone did what was right in his own eyes," as depicted in Chapter 17. Despite God's faithfulness, the people consistently fall back into religious impurity and lawlessness. The pattern of leadership in Judges highlights the fact that "Israel had no king," which ultimately forms the rationale for Israel's petition for a king in 1 and 2 Samuel.



God provides a way for Israel to return to faithful relationship by choosing to turn away from serving their own interests and priorities, so that God can set them on a path toward restoration and reconciliation.

Think on, respond to, and share your thoughts on the following in the general group: 1. What commitments should be held and exhibited by a successful leader? What foundations

should be the basis of such commitments? 2. What commitments do you hold dear on which your life depends? Are there models in your life that influenced you



in making decisions about these commitments? For instance, Civil Rights Legend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., said often to adherents in so many words, "If a person has nothing for which he or she would die for, he or she has no reason to live." What do you think of this expression of commitment? More precisely, King stated, "If a man hasn't discovered something he will die for, he isn't fit to live,"

thus reflecting his belief that true fulfillment comes from dedication to causes greater than oneself such as he demonstrated in his lifestyle.

EDUCATE: (10-15 min.)

Joshua 24:18-21: Joshua 24:15 expresses Joshua's lifelong commitment to live by God's command, and it is a fitting tribute to his character that his last act is to lead the people in covenant renewal (Joshua 24:1-27). Joshua is seen as an ideological forerunner for Israel's kings, especially considering the reforming period under Josiah's reign (Deuteronomy 17:18-20; 1 Kings 2:1-14). Summarizing chapters 22-24 of the Book of Joshua, the ESV Reformation Study Bible states, "The book closes with three chapters about Israel's faithfulness, following God's faithfulness that has been the main subject so far (21:43-45). The human response demanded by God's remarkable grace is the recurring theme of the final chapters. Each chapter begins with Joshua summoning the people (22:1; 23:1-2; 24:1), and focuses on the faithfulness God now requires of them" Joshua's paradoxical statement that the people "are not able to serve the Lord" comes true all too soon. "It is based on the holiness of God, who cannot be approached casually (Psalm 15:1; 2; Ecclesiastes 5:1, 2). Also, Joshua warns the people because he knows their rebelliousness himself Only a people separated from 'pagan' ways (Leviticus 18:3; 20:26) can serve the God who is holy, entirely separate from other gods (Leviticus 19:2)" (Ibid). Joshua asserts that "God's dealing will change from grace to judgment (Genesis 6:7). In another sense God never changes (1 Samuel 15:29), since His promise has always included the threat of judgment (23:15; Genesis 6:6)).... The people reject the possibility [indicated] or predicted in v. 20" (Ibid.) and assert their loyalty to God.

Joshua 24:22-27: We witness: "At the end of his life, Joshua led Israel in a reaffirmation of the covenant, much as Moses did before he died (Deuteronomy 32:46). As with Deuteronomy, there may be an analogy between this covenant renewal and the kind of treaties that were typically used to formalize relations between powerful sovereign nations and weaker client states. These treaties, called 'suzerainty treaties,' commonly included elements like those found in Joshua 24, such as a historical prologue reviewing the care given by the powerful party to the client (vv. 2-13); a prohibition of any outside alliance (vv. 14, 23); and provision for a written document (vv. 25, 26). There are also significant differences between such ancient treaties and Joshua 24" (Ibid.). Joshua asserts, when "[the people] are accused of forsaking the Lord the case against them will be supported by their decision on this occasion.... [He thus] formalized the relationship (compare Genesis 15:18; Deuteronomy 4:23; 29:1)....[The statutes and rules] would specify the content of Israel's obedience to the Lord.... Compare how the stones at Gilgal were to provide a testimony to what God had done (4:20-24)" (Ibid.). Joshua's final words promote careful observance of the Law, but his appeal grows out of a conviction he attempts to model throughout his life. The Book of Joshua closes with an announcement of the deaths and burials of Joshua and Eleazar, and the burial of Joseph's bones at Shechem.

ELEVATE: (10 min.)

We can make worship a priority in our lives by identifying the idols that distract us from God so that we will not be diverted from faithful living. God invites us to worship.

Break into small groups and ponder and discuss with one another the following issues and assertions: 1. Our call is to follow in God's ways, not the world's ways. 2. Adults in positions of power may see themselves as spiritually independent, but the life of faith asks us to walk humbly and worship God as the ultimate authority. 3. God is always faithful, and we can trust that He will always lead us in the right ways. We can make a conscious choice every day to be faithful and serve God. 4. We can do our part in maintaining a healthy relationship with God by worshipping Him, loving and serving Him and our neighbors, and taking care of ourselves. 5. Being in community with other people who worship, love, and serve God is part of a healthy relationship with Him and a reflection of His glory. 6. Faith communities exist so that people can encourage, listen, and learn from each other so that we all grow together in love for God and our neighbor.

1. Show the class one or more worship bulletins from your church services. Discuss the different parts of the service and the ways you worship God in each part. What is important about each part of the service?
2. Invite participants to share ways they spend time with God when they are not at church. Ask each participant to reflect on the worship practice (communal or personal) that is the most meaningful to them. Ask them to write a journal entry about this worship practice. Why is it meaningful to them? What does it teach about God? What do they think and feel when experiencing this worship practice?
3. Discuss any information your class gathered in Lesson 3, September 20, 2026, about Canaanite worship practices, and/or research local gods such as Baal, Anat, Asherah, Dagon, and El in a Bible dictionary. Discuss why Joshua would need to warn his followers about worshipping these gods.
4. Work with the group to write a definition of the word 'idol.' Help them to think of idols as anything that takes our focus away from putting God first in our lives. Write down the definition you create and save it to use again in Lesson 8, October 25, 2026. Ask participants to give examples of idols the Israelites might have worshipped in Joshua's time. Then, ask them to give examples of idols we might worship in our time. Write these down and save this list to use again in Lesson 8, October 25, 2026.
5. Read Joshua 23–24. According to this passage, what were the Israelites to do to be faithful to God? Review Exodus 20:1–17 and Deuteronomy 6:4–9. What do these passages add to the understanding of how the Israelites were to remain faithful to God?
6. Provide magazines and catalogs and ask participants to search for images of what faithful living looks like in our time and context. If your class meets virtually, ask participants to search the internet for images of what faithful living looks like. Ask for volunteers to share what images they found. Ask if they were searching for specific images, and if so, what were they? If your class searched the internet, what words or phrases were used in the search?

Key Verse: [Joshua said,] “Put away the gods that your ancestors served beyond the River and in Egypt and serve the Lord.” Joshua 24:14b