

# **Choose**

## **Joshua 24:15**

Well, we have come to the end of yet another year. 2019 is soon over and we will celebrate 2020's arrival. Joyce and I will be traveling over the next two weeks and I ask for your prayers as we do so. As we get to the end of this year it is a time to reflect. From a physical point of view, we have accomplished so much in the past two years. Our building and grounds are improved, and we continue to do things as needed. We have better lighting in the auditorium, our audio/visual is better, our safety issues are all resolved. The Elders wish to thank all those who took on this monumental load of work. From a spiritual point of view, we have grown a great deal. We have begun our Lads to Leaders program; we have incorporated time into our times of worship for our young men to be publicly involved; we have training sessions for our youth and adults; we have begun small groups two days a week with more to come; we have added two more Elders and will soon add another Deacon. It has been a wonderful year for West Side.

In our text, although the people of God had not yet completed the conquest of the Promised Land, they were restless. Israel had filtered into three groups: Some of the people were strong in the faith, making a difference for God in their society. There were others who had sold out body and soul to contemporary thoughts, morals and practices. And in between the two were a large group of their countrymen who had made no clear decision as to where they stood in relation to God. Joshua directs his remarks to this middle group urging them to move beyond indecision and restlessness, to a clear-cut decision for God.

All 3 groups still exist today. Ask yourself, "which one am I in"? I can only speak for my house. Joyce and I long ago decided that for the rest of our lives we would do our best to serve God and teach our family to do likewise. But each generation will come onto the scene and make that decision for themselves.

Why is it that right decisions are more difficult to make than wrong ones? In life we find that taking the path of least resistance is what makes people and rivers crooked. Some of the decisions that we make in life are not that earth shattering, history will see little difference in the cereal you choose to eat for breakfast, but there are choices in life that are important, even life altering, and have consequences.

Joshua begins in verses 3-13 by rehearsing for them all what God has done for them. He asks them to examine the facts and then decide. Joshua's primary concern is that he wants them to know who the real God is. Joshua wants to remind them that they did not win this war by their power, but by the power of God. But the people nevertheless must choose God for themselves – intelligently, decisively and willingly.

This is the God who made heaven and earth. This is the God who demonstrated His love by sending His only Son to earth to live among us. This is the God who knew that we could never earn our way into heaven by good works, so He went to the cross bearing our sins. This is the God whom the grave could not hold and rose victoriously from it. This is the God who established the church and who is coming back to bring all human history to a culmination. That is Whom we serve.

## **WE CHOOSE WHOM WE WILL SERVE** vv. 14-15

There can be little doubt about what Joshua is after. The word “serve” appears seven times in verses fourteen and fifteen. Joshua that day called for a decision that would help end the spiritual, intellectual and moral restlessness that marked so many lives. Joshua demands a commitment when he says, “And now fear the Lord and serve him whole heartedly and without reservation.”

Hundreds of years later, the prophet Elijah on Mount Carmel gave a similar challenge. *“And Elijah came near to all the people and said, “How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him.” And the people did not answer him a word.”* **1 Kings 18:21**

Joshua urged them to rationally consider the options. Joshua now presents them with four options. **1.** They could follow the gods of Mesopotamia, *“the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River,”* as Abraham did before his call. **2.** They could worship the gods of Egypt which they are so familiar with from 400 hundred years of slavery in Egypt. **3.** Or if they preferred, they could adopt the gods of the Canaanites whom they had just spent seven years defeating. **4.** But the real God was still an option!

Joshua reflects on all that God has done (vv. 1-13) and shows the waves of God’s goodness. The same pattern of the goodness of God is depicted in Rom chapters 1-11 and then Rom 12:1-2 *“I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”*

## **Four ingredients of a true decision for God:**

### **1. We Must Be Willing to Quit Straddling the Fence**

There are far too many in the church today that are trying to keep one foot in the world and one foot in the church. They don’t want to make a commitment that might change their status in the world. And they don’t want to give up their sin in order to really be right with God. So, they end up sitting on the fence, not really a part of the world and not really a part of the church. Joshua challenges us to acknowledge that it is time to decide. Either enter the world and live by its standards and collect its rewards, no matter how temporary. Or decide to follow God, without reservation. One finally must make a decision.

The answer for some is, “Well I want to but not now, now is not a good time.” The truth is that for some there is never a good time. They will not come to Christ when they are up because they don’t sense the need. They won’t come to Christ when they are down. They are too proud.

They won't come when they are in between because they don't even take time then to think about it.

## **2. A decision for Christ must not be made lightly**

Joshua is 110 years of age, a battle-hardened soldier of God. He bore the scars of long-term commitment. His choice to follow God was not made lightly, nor was it held lightly. Joshua challenged the people to choose to serve God and affirmed that this was his settled choice as well. The tense that he used involves continuous action. That is, it involves the past, but it also involves the present and the future. It is as if Joshua had said, **“I have chosen to serve the Lord; I am choosing the same path of service now; and I will go on choosing to serve God until the very end.”** To Joshua serving the Lord was a daily choice.

## **3. We must be willing to go public with our faith.**

Jesus had something to say to those who have a private confidence in Him, but we are unwilling to acknowledge Him in public. He said, ***“He that denies Me before men, him will I deny before My Father which is in heaven.”*** Don't say that you believe in Christ if you are not willing to identify yourself as one of his disciples, in your home, in your business, in your social life, in fact...wherever you go!

## **4. We must be willing to follow through with all that we have**

There could be no mixing of allegiance to God with other gods. When Joshua led the children of Israel into the Promised Land, they had picked up the contemporary religious practices and had mingled them with those laid out in the word of God. A firm choice had to be made then, as well as every generation to follow. Men must choose between expediency and principle, between this world and eternity, between God and anything that would try to take His place. **WE INFLUENCE OTHERS WITH OUR CHOICE!** Joshua ends his address with what has become known as one of the most powerful and courageous testimonies and witness in all of Scripture.

Joshua said, “... *But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.*” This statement is the culmination of a life lived in obedience to God and His word. There were times when Joshua failed. There were times when he was discouraged, but once Joshua had committed his life to God, he went all the way with it. Joshua not only influenced his own household but also motivated many others to serve the Lord. Good or bad - our influence extends beyond our immediate surroundings.

Folks, we are each challenged to go on and by deliberate, daily choices follow Christ in fearless faith just as Joshua did. It may not make us popular, but it will make us powerful as the people of God. The book of Joshua ends on a note of affirmation. The people responded in Joshua 24:24, “*The Lord our God will we serve and His voice will we obey.*”

## **Conclusion**

I urge **do not** go on straddling the middle. The apostle John described a church made up of people who were neither hot nor cold (Rev 3:15). The Lord said there “I wish you were one or the other.” But the fact that they were just lukewarm the Lord said He found nauseating.

We are living in an age when just as He has in the past God is looking for men and women of fearless faith, who will step up and step out to accomplish something great for God!