

FOLLOWING THE LORD

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Lesson: Joshua 24:1-25

Most of you have heard of Joshua, the great leader of the children of Israel. He was a brave fighter, a man who led the children of Israel into war. It was he who led them into the land of Canaan, and they beat all the nations there, and took the land. Every battle except one little one, they won.

Joshua was a man who trusted in the Lord, and made all the people to worship Him. And when Joshua was old, he called all the people together and told them all the wonderful things the Lord had done for them. How He had called Abraham into this land, and promised it to him; how He had brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, and led them safely, and made the Red Sea to drown the Egyptian soldiers; how He had led them in the wilderness, and made it possible for them to conquer Jericho and all the other nations.

And now, said Joshua, they must choose. Are they going to follow the Lord, or are they going to follow other gods? Let them choose now. But, Joshua said, "As for me and my house, we will follow the Lord." And the people said they wanted to follow the Lord too.

Then Joshua said to them, "No, you can't follow the Lord." What a strange thing to say! He said they can't follow the Lord, because if they started to follow Him, and then turned away, He would punish them, and be very angry with them. It would be better if they never followed Him.

But the people said, "No, they wanted to follow the Lord." They really wanted to follow Him. They wouldn't turn away, and make Him angry. Then Joshua said to them that if they promised to follow the Lord, they must know what they are doing. They are to blame if they turn away. And they said, they admitted that if they turned away they were to blame.

You see, Joshua wanted to make sure that they knew what they were doing. He told them all the wonderful things the Lord had done, and then warned them of what would happen if they started to follow the Lord, and then turned away. Now they knew what they were doing.

Children, you are being led by the Lord, right at this moment. He is leading you and guiding you as you grow up, and giving you help every moment, so that you will be led in the right way. Now there is going to come a time, when you are grown up, when you too are going to be asked to choose, whether you are

going to follow the Lord or not. When you are men and women, you are going to choose. Will you follow the Lord, or will you follow other gods, like the god of money, or of evil loves?

Now it is important for you, just as it was for the children of Israel, to know that once you have made that choice you must keep to it. You can't say, "Yes, I will follow the Lord," and then turn away from Him when you don't like what He says. If you decide to follow the Lord, you must keep on doing so, all your life long, otherwise the Lord has a perfect right to be cross with you, doesn't He?

And we, your teachers, and your ministers, and your mothers and fathers, try while you are children to be a little like Joshua. We try to tell you all the marvelous things that the Lord will do for you. You remember how Joshua told the children of Israel how the Lord led them safely? We try to tell you too how the Lord will be with you every day of your childhood, keeping you from your spiritual enemies, and feeding you and giving you love and truth to make your spirits grow strong. You remember how Joshua told them how the Lord had brought them into a wonderful land, and given them food to eat that they had not planted, and land to live in that they had not worked for? We try to show you how the Lord is leading each one of you into the most wonderful land there is, into heaven, where there is food for all, and where there is love and happiness forever for you.

Your parents and teachers are trying to teach you many things. And all the things we teach you should help you to live a good and happy life when you grow up—whether it is learning about this world, or learning about heaven. And what we want to give you most of all is the knowledge to help you choose the right path in life. We hope that when you grow up to be men and women, you can come before the Lord and promise to follow Him all the days of your life and forever. And when you make that promise, you will know what you are doing. You will know the Lord, because you have been taught about Him. You will know what He wants of you, because you will know what His Word says. You will know the happiness He is offering you, and you will know the things that make Him angry and sad. More than anything, we want you to know what you are doing, when you come before the Lord as a grown man or woman, ready to live your life for yourselves. We hope you will say, as Joshua did: "As for me and my house, we will follow the Lord." And that you will go out into your life, and keep that promise for evermore. *Amen.*