

It's even more amazing to hear from a former alcoholic directly. How for years they'd drink to get drunk. Spend their money and time in pursuit of just that goal. They did it to escape, they did it to feel better, did it just because they liked the feeling. Sure they got in trouble, had a few close calls on the road, they may have even tried to quit once or twice. But things never changed. Suddenly one day change wasn't just something to be tried, it was going to happen. Addicts can't always quit easily, but for some they're alcoholics one day and change overnight into former alcoholics.

That kind of change doesn't come easy. Just like looking around your life there's probably things you'd like to change. An unhealthy eating pattern, a stressing work schedule, family time that's almost non-existent. Life is so frantic and distracting especially when it comes to the pressures of family time. Parents barely see each other as they whistle by hauling one kid one way and the other somewhere else. Children are stretched from one activity to the other. Are these activities serving us or are we serving the activities?

Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel together. The old preacher, prophet, spy, and leader was about to speak. This last speech wasn't directed at his legacy or at taking shots at people who had wronged him. He was going to speak about their future which was cloudy. But it would clear up if they listened to what he had to say. Now is the time for us to listen to Joshua's challenge and take the time...

Love takes time for family

Not every day is like the 4th of July. Sure we enjoy fireworks, barbecues, friends, and family that day. But most years July 5th means we're right back to normal. No fireworks, parades, or vacation on that day. Some days for the Israelites were more like the 4th of July. The Red Sea split, the walls of Jericho fell. But most days were not. Most days were normal, like July 5th for us. They got up, did chores, ate, visited friends, played, and slept. Pretty much every day for you.

But this day was special. Everything stopped because Joshua was speaking. Well along in years he was wise and had fought the good fight of faith. The words he spoke that day still ring in our ears. **"Now fear the Lord and serve him with all faithfulness, throw away the gods your forefathers worshipped and serve the Lord. Choose this day whom you will serve."** This call by Joshua was anything but routine. Not one moment of their lives could be left out. They couldn't just turn away from the false gods, they had to destroy them. Joshua was demanding 100% commitment to serving the Lord. It was God who planned, sacrificed, and initiated the relationship with them. To go after anyone or anything else as god just wouldn't make sense.

So the choice seems easy. But examine your life. This is 100% commitment to the Lord. Like 100% juice requires that no other substances be in there, so too any little stumble or complaint against God isn't 100% commitment. Every time a problem comes up and our checkbook is the first place we go and prayer is the last place we go that's not 100% commitment. And the immoral living of the world around us influences us more than we think. The temptation to please ourselves is everywhere. On second thought the choice Joshua lays down before the Israelites and us is not easy at all. Not so easy when we're so totally committed to sin instead of God.

It's always good when choosing a roofing company to spend time getting different quotes. Check references and ask around. Check the company's reputation out online. Past work is a great indicator of what that company will do in the future. Joshua knew that principle and so set out to remind the Israelites of what God had done for them. He took them back to Abraham's time and how he was promised many descendants and got many descendants. He took them to Moses and Aaron and how God promised they would leave Egypt and they did. He took them to Jericho where they could still see the rubble of the city God had given to them. These Israelites weren't going to make their choice to follow God based on nothing. **"You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed."** That would give them all they needed to make their choice.

Today is the day to choose. Who's it going to be? Whom are you serving and who will you serve? Examine your history. Hasn't God made a promise to you? In love he sent you his son to be a substitute. In love he canceled the debt you owed based on Christ. In love he provides something for you to remember in your baptism. In love he provides you today with another way to remember, partaking in his actual body and his actual blood. Your choice is not based on nothing. Rather it is based on study, knowledge, and review of the promises of God. They put you in the right frame of mind to make your decision.

When you flip a coin you can pick heads or tails. No one ever picked edge. That doesn't happen. You either have heads or tails. So too Joshua was pushing them to a choice of two options. **"If serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the river, or the gods of the Amorites."** Simply put it was either you're with God or you're not. Can't have both idols and God with a foot in both camps. Joshua was prepared to take the lead. This battle worn veteran of the human race was willing to stand alone if necessary. **"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."**

Serving the Lord always begins in your family. Dads, listen up because Joshua is speaking first and foremost to you. Don't be a slouch. Don't be lazy. Don't sit idle while your family starves spiritually. It's your responsibility. Peter was indicating that when he spoke of the roles of men and women. Men, your wives are equal heirs of Christ with you. She needs you, in fact God requires you, to watch out for her spiritual well being and that of your whole family. Her role of servant helper to you is much harder to fill when she must always be making up for the role you don't want to do. Children have a more difficult time respecting and honoring parents when parents are taking on their role. Joshua led his family to love the Lord. Dads lead your family to do the same.

Right now, everyone in your mind thank God for your family. Remember each of their names. Take time to think of their needs. Then determine how you can serve those needs. Take time to care for the gift of family. Begin with a commitment to better balance your time. Unclutter your calendar. Consider what you'll take out of your week in order to clear time for family. Determine what will be most meaningful for them. Ask what will draw them out of the idolatry of the world into the arms of their God; out of the self-centered activities into a passion to follow the Lord.

It's harder to leave the idols and self centered lifestyle if we're doing it alone. Thanks to God we're not. everyone here is rededicate themselves to serving the Lord. So we're in this together, brothers and sisters in the faith. We're there to hold each other accountable, to challenge each other, to inspire each other, and to encourage each other. Each of us is a precious child of God brought into the family through Christ. Because of that Joshua's question applies to us, choose this day whom you will serve.

I get the sense that Joshua's impassioned sermon whipped the Israelites up into an emotional response. Who wouldn't respond enthusiastically to what Joshua was asking? Each of you would say, **"Far be it from us to forsake the Lord to serve other gods! It was the Lord our God...he protected us on our entire journey...we too will serve the Lord, because he is our God."** But Joshua knew, I know, and you know too. It's not what we say on Sunday; it's how we live the other six days. Take time for your family. Give hugs and attention. Listen with renewed interest. Plan special events, show kindness, and especially take time for spiritual nourishment. Make these things so important nothing cuts you off from doing them. Let your family be a place where Christ's love is known. Let Christ's love lead you to make the right choice.