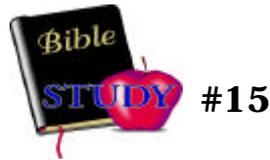


## Journey Into God's Word



Joshua 1-24

Proverb 21-31

John 16-21

*“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”(John 16:33)*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We all want victory. After all, who wants to be a loser? Here is Jesus, in John 16:33, speaking of peace and being an overcomer and He is about to die! We want victory not death. We want to be victorious Christians without negative attitudes, bad tempers, nasty mouths, bitterness, etc. The trouble is, the closer we get to Jesus, instead of peace and overcoming the world, the clearer it becomes that we possess the very things we hate within others. Suddenly we discover that the real terrorist isn't "out there some where" but dwells within us. As a result, instead of feeling victorious the very opposite happens. We get depressed. We make excuses for our bad attitudes, greed, anger and bitterness. Its much easier to blame others as long as we can until we become so embittered that we just give up. Then away we go again, running, running, running. Starting over, pretending we are victorious, we select those Bible verses that make us feel good, but always avoiding those like John 12:24-26 where Jesus says, "I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. However, if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves Me must follow Me; and where I am My servant also will be."

As we study John 16-21 we see that Jesus is going to the cross and that is where He wants to take us. Only as we die to ourselves through Christ can we experience a resurrection. We want to believe that, but almost everything we have been taught and most of what we see happening in the world around us seems to

disprove it. After all, isn't it the rich who are getting richer? The politicians who do the best job at cutting the deals, engaging in the God-talk and taking the political contributions, are the ones who usually win. Where does that leave the rest of us? We don't want to be losers walking away from God, so we often settle for something else like a form of religion that denies the real power. Frequently we turn to the book of Joshua, looking up all those Scriptures that talk about being strong and courageous. But instead of applying them to moving into the unknown like death-to-self and being vulnerable by trusting God and obeying, we will do what Achan did and justify keeping those bad attitudes, bitterness, anger, greed, etc. Look at Achan's justification for his actions in Joshua 7:21. What does he say there and what ended up happening to him?

As long as we keep those things "hidden in the ground inside" the tents of our lives, we will never become a victorious people. The fact is real victory comes through following Christ to the cross and experiencing the power of His resurrection. We now have a choice. We can either keep on going, reading all the self-help pop theology books, playing the "I'm okay, your okay" games or we can follow Christ to the cross. This means instead of running off again when things get uncomfortable, we are going to "stand firm" in the reality that God "gives us the victory through our Lord Christ." This victory applies to not only this life, but also to death itself. As the Message Bible says in 1 Cor. 15:53 to the end of the chapter, "In the resurrection scheme of things, this has to happen; everything perishable taken off the shelves and replaced by the imperishable, this mortal replaced by the immortal. Then the saying will come true: Death swallowed by Triumphant Life! Who got the last word, Oh, Death? Oh, Death, who's afraid of you now? It was sin that made death as frightening and law-code guilt that gave sin its leverage, its destructive power. Now in a single victorious stroke of life, all three-sin, guilt, death-are gone, the gift of our Master, Jesus Christ. Thank God! With all this going for us, my dear friends stand your ground. Don't hold back. Throw yourselves into the work of the Master, confident that nothing you do for Him is a waste of time or effort."

As you study John 16, note that you are not alone in your journey to the cross with Christ. In John 16:13-15, who does He say He is sending to guide us into all truth? What does this mean to you? Then there is the power of prayer. What does Jesus have to say about prayer in verses 23-27 in John 16?

"Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only True God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent."(John 17:3) Eternal life, the ultimate victory, is the result of a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. As we confess

our sins and turn from them, Christ, the hope of glory is free to be resurrected within us, filling us with the Holy Spirit. What does Jesus pray for in John 17:11? What does this mean to you?

As you follow Jesus to the cross in John 18 and 19, what happens? Have you ever denied Him as Peter did in John 18:15-27? As you study the trial of Jesus, what hypocrisies and injustices do you observe? How does John 19:10,11 show that Jesus is victoriously in control even in the face of death?

In John 19:25 we read, “Near the cross of Jesus stood His mother, His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene.” In Mark 16:9 we see that Mary Magdalene is the one Jesus drove seven demons out. She is one that could certainly be called a disciple of Jesus. She had not only traveled with Jesus, but she was also an energetic, caring person. Jesus had miraculously freed her life of seven demons. Her freedom in Christ not only enabled her to be with Him at the time of His death, but also as she went to anoint His body, she discovered the empty tomb. Describe that discovery as told in John 20:1-18. Why do you think Jesus chose to appear first to Mary Magdalene? What do you think her willingness to believe and obey, rather than understand, had to do with her being chosen for this first appearance? Then there is Thomas. Although he doubted, he did not remain in his doubt. How does John 20:24-30 show that Thomas moved from his doubts to decision and belief? What did Mary Magdalene (John 20:18) and the disciples do in John 20:25 once they had seen the resurrected Christ? Do you believe that Jesus has risen from the dead? Who are you sharing this fact with? In addition to Mary Magdalene and the ten disciples behind closed doors, we see Jesus appearing to other women at the tomb (Matt 28:8-10). He also appeared to Peter in Jerusalem (Luke 24:34), the two travelers on the road (Mark 16:12,13), a crowd of 500 (1 Cor. 15:6), Jesus brother James (1 Cor. 15:7) and those who watched Jesus ascend into heaven (Luke 24:44-49, Acts 1:3-8).

In John 21 we see Jesus appearing to seven disciples while they were fishing. In John 21:7 “the disciple who Jesus loved,” John, was the only disciple who recognized Jesus in the dim morning light. What miracle did Jesus do in John 21:1-6 and how did it compare to the one described in Luke 5:1-11? How do you think this helped John recognize Jesus? In what way are you keeping track of the miracles He is doing in your life?

Why do you think Jesus asked Peter 3 times, do you truly love Me? What do you think it had to do with the fact that Peter had denied him earlier 3 times? What statement of victory lies in Jesus’ response to Peter in John 20:18,19? In

verse 19 we read, ‘Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then He said to him, ‘Follow me!’ ’ What does this verse say to you about living and dying victoriously?

The victory promised in John, Joshua and Proverbs can be summarized in 1John 5:3,4,5. “This is love for God: to obey His commands. And His commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.”

How do we experience victory to overcome a careless tongue described in Proverbs 25:23 or slander (Prov. 25:18) or gossip (Prov. 20:20-28)? Commit that tongue and the rest of your life to Jesus Christ. Believe that Jesus is the Son of God and let Him set you free. Whether it is wine or beer (Prov. 20:1), laziness (Prov. 20:4), dishonesty (Prov. 20:10), fraud (Prov. 20:17), vengeance (Prov. 20:22), remember “this is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.” (1John 5:4) How does this relate to Proverbs 20:27? What will the Lord find when He searches your inmost being?

According to Proverbs 21:1, who controls those who are in control? What does Proverbs 21:4 say is the lamp of the wicked? What does Proverbs 21:13 say that affects our prayer life? What does Proverbs 21:31 say about victory? According to Proverbs 22:2 what do the rich and poor have in common? Look at Proverbs 22:9 and also at verse 16? Compare the generous person to the one who oppresses the poor. Who will take up the case of the poor according to verse 23?

What does Proverbs 23:21, 29-35 have to say about drinking? “If you falter in times of trouble how small is your strength.”(Prov. 24:10) “Know also that wisdom is sweet to your soul; if you find it, there is a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off.”(Prov. 24:14) “Do no fret because of evil men or be envious of the wicked for the evil man has no future hope and the lamp of the wicked will be snuffed out.”(Prov 24:19,21) “A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest—and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man.”(Prov. 24:33,34) what do the above verses found in Proverbs 24 have to do with victorious living?

The final section of Proverbs (Prov. 25:1-31-1) is directed at those who are leaders or aspire to become leaders. It concludes with a description of a truly godly wife who reveals godly wisdom. Please study these last six chapters carefully. Then go through them chapter by chapter like we did above and list

what steps must be taken to experience a truly victorious life and what must be avoided.

Many of you know how difficult it is to start over. When you were young, it was easy to be idealistic, to have dreams of a bright future, and to have goals. Then something happened. Perhaps the bottom dropped out because of what you did like drugs, alcohol, the self-destructive life, or maybe it was something that was done to you. You may have lost everything because you trusted someone and they let you down. Now put yourself in Joshua's situation. You have to wander in the wilderness for 40 years, as the result of the unbelief of other spies who went into the Promised Land and came back with a distorted fear-filled report. You spoke up for what was right but the rest of the community, with the exception of your fellow spy Caleb, chose to disbelieve you and instead listened to the negative report of the other spies. As a result, you have to spend the best years of your life with nothing but the dry dead desert, the manna day after day and a whole lot of negative, complaining people. Well, forty years have passed. All those negative unbelieving people have died and now you are being told that you need to lead the community into the Promised Land. You are promised you will be victorious, but weren't you told that when you first left Egypt? Now you not only have to regain your vision but somehow inspire these people that you are leading, that they will be victorious this time around. You can't afford to fail. You know the results; after all you have been there and done that. Moses, your mentor, who will soon be dying, knows what you are up against. That's why he gave you the book of Deuteronomy and said right before he died, "Take to heart all the words I have solemnly declared to you this day, so that you may command your children to obey carefully all the words of this law. They are not just idle words for you—they are your life." That is why we are taking this systematic journey through the word of God. What we are studying are not just idle words, they are your life!

Joshua's key to success was his submission to God's purpose for his life. He knew the victorious life did not mean the accumulation of things. Achan did that and the end result was the stoning of Achan and his family. (Joshua 7:25) A victorious life, Joshua knew, was not trying to discover Joshua's purpose for his life but following God in doing God's purpose in Joshua's life.

The book of Joshua is divided into 2 parts. The first, Joshua 1-12, tells of the military conquests that were victorious when the Children of Israel obeyed God. They lost when they attacked the small town of Ai because sin had invaded the community through Achan (Joshua 7). Once that sin was removed, victory

resumed in chapter 13-22. We see the assignment of the land among the various tribes and then Joshua's final address and his death in chapter 23, 24.

From the first chapter of Joshua to the end (Joshua 24) we see that victory came as the Children of Israel trusted in God rather than in their military power, money or anything else. In chapter 1, Joshua rallies the people by telling them over and over to be "strong and courageous." In Joshua 1:9, what reason does Joshua give the people that they are to be strong and courageous? In Joshua 6:2-5 how does God assure Joshua of victory? "I coveted them and took them." (Joshua 7:21) How did these words and the actions that proceeded them result in defeat, both for the person who spoke them as well as the nation as a whole? After the defeat described in Joshua 7, how does God encourage Joshua in Joshua 8:1,2 to try again? When you experience defeat, do you give up or do you search your heart and try again? If sin is the reason for defeat, than repentance is necessary. Once sin is dealt with, forgiveness and victory is the result. We do not need to remain buried in guilt and filled with discouragement. Remember John 16:33. Describe how it applies to dealing with guilt and discouragement.

"The men of Israel sampled their provisions but did not inquire of the Lord. (Joshua 9:14) Why is it important to "inquire of the Lord" at all times and how were Joshua and the Children of Israel deceived when they did not do this in Joshua 9? Throughout the book of Joshua, we see these words: "Do not be afraid: do not be discouraged. Be strong and courageous." If we want a victorious life, why is it important that we follow this command?

"Joshua waged war against those Kings for a long time." (Joshua 11:18) Why are patience, endurance and perseverance so important if we want to be a victorious people? At the same time according to Joshua 18:3, why is it important that we do not wait when we are to be moving forward by faith? What 3 directives in Joshua 22:5 summarize the commandment and the Law of Moses?

How does Joshua 23:8, "But you are to hold fast to the Lord your God," summarize the key to a victorious life? "Now fear the Lord and serve Him with all faithfulness." (Joshua 24:14) "As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord." (Joshua 24:15) Can you say the same thing? Have you given your life to the Lord Jesus completely? "What area of your life do you still need to surrender in order to experience victory? What Scripture are you hanging on to when you feel defeated?

Remember, no matter what you are struggling with, there is hope. Christ is Risen! With that in mind, this week let us study the book of Judges 1-21, Ecclesiastics 1-12 and Romans 1-8. “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart, I (Jesus) have overcome the world.”(John 16:33)

Yours in Christ

Larry Rice