

Sermon Study Guide



#4: The Puzzling Things of Life

Series: *Courage in the Crucible*

February 7, 2021 | Dr. Stephen G. Tan

In this study on the book of Joshua, we learn how we can stand courageous when trials, difficult situations, opposition, and inevitable changes surround us.

Reflect

What event in your life did you think would make you happy? Did it?

Read and Discuss

Scripture

Joshua 5:1-15

Discussion Questions

When we go through trials and uncertainties, we often struggle to understand how God could use circumstances, people, and events to bring us closer to Him. Here are five biblical principles to help us find the courage to live for God when life's circumstances puzzle us:

1. ***God works in the background unbeknownst to us for our benefit (v. 1).*** Why were the kings from Jericho to the Mediterranean Sea suddenly scared of the people of Israel? Did Joshua and the Israelites recognize right away the purpose of the drying up of the Jordan river aside from the fact that they could cross the river safely? Share a situation in your life that you knew God is at work to help you, but you didn't realize it until much later. Whom did God use or what event in your life did He use for your betterment and benefit?
2. ***God requires us to live in obedience even if things don't make sense or don't seem to be the right timing (v. 2-7).*** What was the reason why God asked Joshua to circumcise the Israelite men when the procedure would have rendered them useless in fighting anyone in that condition? Share about an experience wherein you felt like you were ignorant of or did not understand what God was doing, yet you knew that you needed to obey God's Word? How would obedience to the Lord in times of uncertainty build up your faith and allow you to trust Him more strongly?
3. ***God puts us in vulnerable situations and exposed positions to learn to trust Him fully (v. 8-9).*** What were the reasons why the Israelites were in such a vulnerable situation that they didn't have any other option but to trust God for protection and victory? Have you ever been in a situation where you felt alone and vulnerable and didn't know who could help you? Why would God put you in those situations? Why should you not pretend that you and your life are perfect? Why is it true that the only person you can fully trust in this world is God Himself?
4. ***God takes away our safety nest to motivate us to do His work and to see other blessings He provides (v. 10-12).*** Why did God stop the provision of manna that had been sustaining the Israelites after they had crossed the land of Canaan? How would you feel if God took away something that you held on to securely? Why do you think God would take away your safety net from you? What other blessings could you possibly see if God takes away the most important thing in your life that you hold on to?
5. ***God reminds us that he takes no sides but we are to align ourselves to His side (v. 13-15).*** What important lesson did Joshua learn upon understanding who the Man with His Sword was? Does success in life automatically mean that you are on God's side? What does it mean to realign yourself to be on God's side? What does "the Lord is by your side" mean?

Respond

In Walk: Navigating through a time of uncertainty and trials is like working through a puzzle. When you are not sure what God is doing, remember to look at the big picture: It's all about Christ; you are

trying to be conformed to His likeness and be more Christlike. Ponder upon these questions:

- Are you living in obedience to God even if things don't make sense or things don't seem to be happening at the right time?
- How do you trust Him when you are in a vulnerable situation?
- Does your safety net limit or hinder you to do His work and recognize the other blessings He provides?
- How are you aligning yourself to His side?

In Prayer: Heavenly Father, I must admit that a lot of times when I am going through some hardships in life, I would wonder where You are. Thank You for reminding me that You know what's going on in my life and that You certainly know what You are doing. Lord, help me to trust you and to align myself to Your side. Thank you for being at work in my life all the time. In Jesus' name. Amen.