



2025 Q4 Lessons of Faith From Joshua Lesson 11

Living in the Land

by Lori Atkins

SABBATH

Memory Text:

A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. Proverbs 15:1, NIV

Did anyone have a chance to put this into practice around the Thanksgiving dinner table with relatives and friends?

Any differing beliefs, opinions, politics, doctrines?

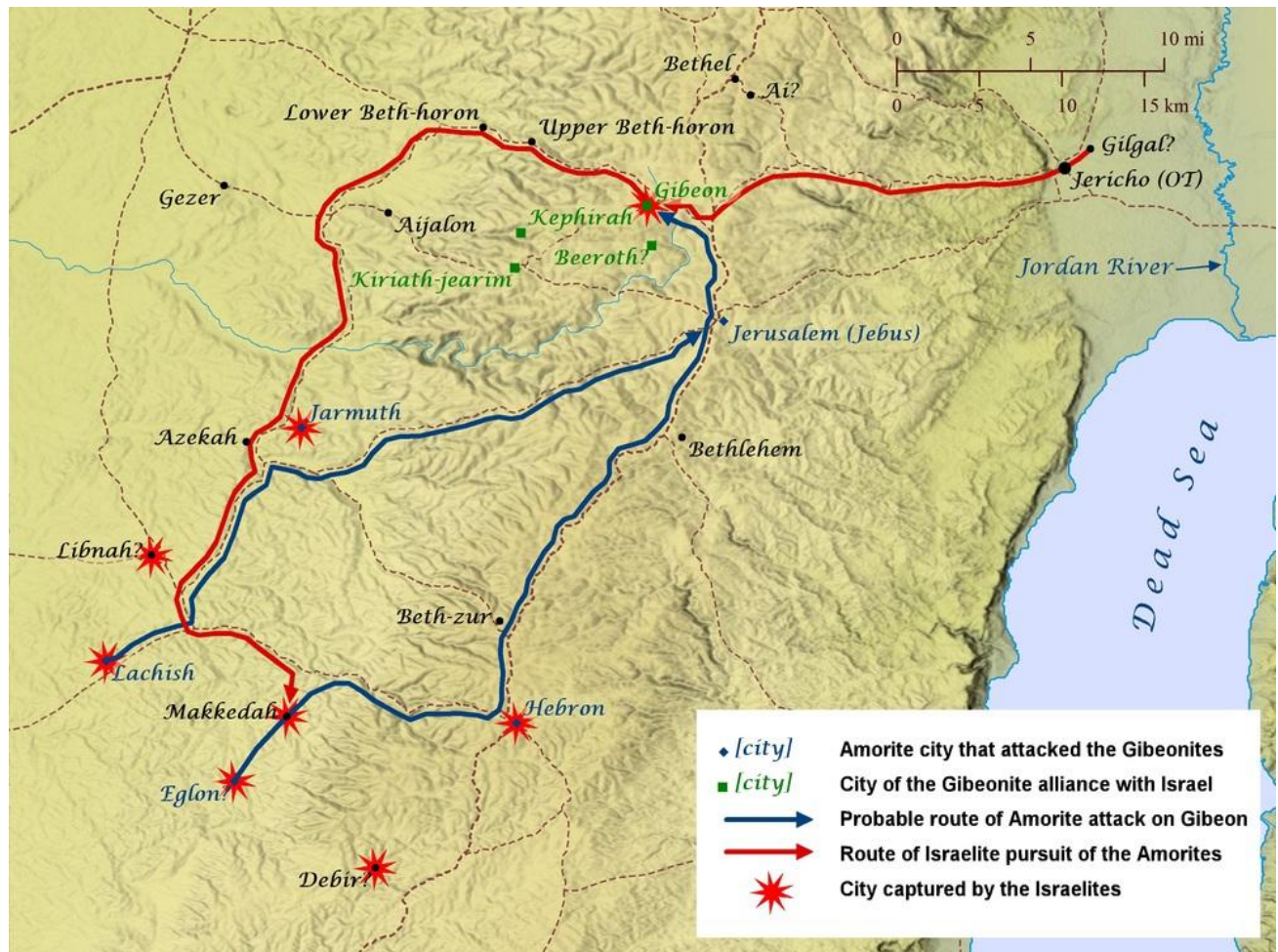
Nothing but peace and tranquility?

We will talk more about how the Israelites (and we) can avoid the wrath/conflict, but first we need to study what caused the differences and potential conflicts between tribes in Joshua 22.

For me, the quarterly did an okay job of explaining the events, but I got much more background insight and details from Chapter 47, “The Division of Canaan,” in the book Patriarchs and Prophets.

To give you some context, the Israelites had crossed over the Jordan into Canaan and because they had eschewed God’s offer of hornets and pestilence, they were busy fighting and conquering the pagan Canaanite nations. They had experienced a military victory at Beth-horon, followed closely by the conquest of southern Canaan. Joshua 10 goes through the whole list of nations and battles, and concludes by saying,

“So Joshua subdued the whole region, including the hill country, the Negev, the western foothills and the mountain slopes, together with all their kings. He left no survivors. He totally destroyed all who breathed, just as the Lord, the God of Israel, had commanded. Joshua subdued them from Kadesh Barnea to Gaza and from the whole region of Goshen to Gibeon. All these kings and their lands Joshua conquered in one campaign, because the Lord, the God of Israel, fought for Israel. Then Joshua returned with all Israel to the camp at Gilgal.” (Joshua 10, NIV)



The tribes of northern Palestine, terrified at the success which had attended the armies of Israel, now entered into a league against them. At the head of this confederacy was Jabin, king of Hazor, a territory to the west of Lake Merom. ‘They came out with all their troops and a large number of horses and chariots—a huge army, as numerous as the sand on the seashore. All these kings joined forces and made camp together at the Waters of Merom to fight against Israel.’ (Patriarch and Prophets, pg 510)



This army was much larger than any that the Israelites had before encountered in Canaan, and again a message of encouragement was given to Joshua:

Do not be afraid of them, because by this time tomorrow I will hand all of them, slain, over to Israel. (Patriarch and Prophets, pg 510)

Near Lake Merom he fell upon the camp of the allies (surprised them) and utterly routed their forces.

“The Lord delivered them into the hand of Israel, who smote them, and chased them...until they left them none remaining.” The chariots and horses that had been the pride and boast of the Canaanites were not to be appropriated by Israel. At the command of God the chariots were burned, and the horses lamed and thus rendered unfit for battle. The Israelites were not to put their trust in chariots or horses, but “in the name of the Lord their God.

One by one the cities were taken, and Hazor, the stronghold of the confederacy, was burned. The **war was continued for several years**, but its close found Joshua master of Canaan. “And the land had rest from war.” (Patriarch and Prophets, pg 510)

Though the power of the Canaanites had been broken, they had not been fully dispossessed. On the west the Philistines still held a fertile plain along the seacoast, while north of them was the territory of the Sidonians. Lebanon also was in the possession of the latter people; and to the south, toward Egypt, the land was still occupied by the enemies of Israel.

Joshua was not, however, to continue the war. There was another work for the great leader to perform before he should relinquish the command of Israel. The whole land, both parts already conquered and that which was yet unsubdued, was to be apportioned among the tribes. And it was the duty of each tribe to fully subdue its own inheritance. If the people should prove faithful to God, He would drive out their enemies from before them; and He promised to give them still greater possessions if they would but be true to His covenant. (Patriarch and Prophets, pg 511)

I'm sure all of us have read these chapters of the Bible many times in our lives, but did you realize that this job of dividing up the promised land amongst the Israelite tribes was such an important work – his last great work before handing things over to Caleb?

And what about the duty of each tribe to fully subdue its own inheritance/territory/community? Does this command sound familiar...what other Old Testament folks were given orders to subdue?

From Genesis 1:26-28:

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "**Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it**; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth. Gen. 1: 26-28.

What needed subduing?

Wasn't the Earth created perfect?

Traditional interpretations of the Hebrew word for "subdue" indicate that it was a strong, forceful verb. It is not a gentle "tend" or "care for"; it implies **bringing something resistant or chaotic under control**... humans, as God's image-bearers, are to bring the potentially wild and chaotic creation

under orderly rule, reflecting God's own ordering of chaos in Genesis 1...Tim paraphrased it as "fill the earth and develop its full potential."

Why do you believe that command was given to both Adam and Eve as well as the Israelite tribes? Why was it so important that they heed the command to subdue and participate in the process to bring it about?

Sense of ownership, skin in the game (literally), they were invested in the well-being and success (salvation) of those new communities.

How much more do you value and respect and cherish something you have fought valiantly for, perhaps lost family/loved ones in the fight, risked everything for compared to something that is just given to you and dropped in your lap.

Think about those definitions and consider the use of the word subdue in these quotes?

The light shining from the cross reveals the love of God. His love is drawing us to Himself. If we do not resist this drawing, we shall be led to the foot of the cross in repentance for the sins that have crucified the Saviour. Then the Spirit of God through faith produces a new life in the soul. The thoughts and desires are brought into obedience to the will of Christ. **The heart, the mind, are created anew in the image of Him who works in us to subdue all things to Himself.** [For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven Col 1:19-20] Then the law of God is written in the mind and heart, and we can say with Christ, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God." Psalm 40:8." {DA 175}

"When men are bound together, not by force or self-interest, but by love, they show the working of an influence that is above every human influence. Where this oneness exists, it is evidence that the image of God is being restored in humanity, that a new principle of life has been implanted. It shows that there is power in the divine nature to withstand the supernatural agencies of evil, and that **the grace of God subdues the selfishness inherent in the natural heart.** (Desire of Ages, pg 678)

The Comforter is called 'the Spirit of truth.' His work is to define and maintain the truth. He first dwells in the heart as the Spirit of truth, and thus He becomes the Comforter. There is comfort and peace in the truth, but no real peace or comfort can be found in falsehood. It is through false theories and traditions that Satan gains his power over the mind. By directing men to false standards, he misshapes the character. [Do we see this happening in society today? Do you see false standards being proclaimed and accepted and do you see people becoming

more Christlike or more debased, abusive, unloving, violent, fearful, selfish and controlling?]

Through the Scriptures the Holy Spirit speaks to the mind, and impresses truth upon the heart. Thus, He exposes error, and expels it from the soul. **It is by the Spirit of truth, working through the word of God, that Christ subdues His chosen people to Himself.**"

(Desire of Ages, pg 671)

After Joshua and Caleb made special requests/claims for land, the Levites were given a specific location because of the sanctuary, and the remaining location of each tribe was determined by lot. The tribe of Ephraim and the half tribe of Manasseh (the children of Joseph) demanded a double portion because of their superior population numbers, but Joshua (who was one of them) refused and insisted that they "get up to the wood country and cut down for thyself there in the land of the Perizzites and of the giants if Mount Ephraim is too narrow for you.

(Patriarch and Prophets, pg 513)

So now we get back to what happened to cause the big misunderstanding and conflict between the divided tribes.

Two of the tribes of Israel, Gad and Reuben, with half the tribe of Manasseh, had received their inheritance before crossing the Jordan...but they had pledged themselves to furnish their proportion of armed men to accompany their brethren across the Jordan and to share their battles till they also should enter upon their inheritance. The obligation had been faithfully discharged...For years they had fought bravely by the side of their brethren. Now the time had come for them to get unto the land of their possession. As they had united with their brethren in the conflicts, so they had shared in the spoils; and they returned 'with much riches...and with very much cattle, with silver, and with gold, and with brass, and with iron, and with very much raiment,' all of which they were to share with those who had remained with the families and flocks. (Patriarch and Prophets, pg 517)

They were now to dwell at a distance from the sanctuary of the Lord, and it was with an anxious heart that Joshua witnessed their departure, knowing how strong would be the temptations, in their isolated and wandering life, to fall into the customs of the heathen tribes that dwelt upon their borders. (Patriarch and Prophets, pg 518)

Who here has experienced this scenario that where you physically live or work isolates you and limits your opportunity to engage with like minded believers/family/friends, and puts you more at risk of falling into the customs of those surrounding you?

What steps did you take or put in place to increase your chances of success?

While the minds of Joshua and other leaders were still oppressed with anxious forebodings, strange tidings reached them. Beside the Jordan, near the place of Israel's miraculous passage of the river, the two and a half tribes had erected a great altar, similar to the altar of burnt offering at Shiloh. The law of God prohibited, on pain of death, the establishment of another worship than that at the sanctuary. If such was the object of this altar, it would, if permitted to remain, lead the people away from the true faith. The representatives of the people assembled at Shiloh, and in the heat of their excitement and indignation proposed to make war at once upon the offenders. (Think social media comments section) Through the influence of the more cautious, however, it was decided to send first a delegation to obtain from the two and a half tribes an explanation of their conduct. Ten princes, one from each tribe, were chosen. (Patriarch and Prophets, pg 518)

The two and a half tribes had been at fault in entering, without explanation, upon an act open to such grave suspicions. The ambassadors, taking it for granted that their brethren were guilty, met them with sharp rebuke. They accused them of rebelling against the Lord, and bade them remember how judgments had been visited upon Israel for joining themselves to Baalpeor. On behalf of all Israel, Phinehas stated to the children of Gad and Reuben that if they were unwilling to abide in that land without an altar for sacrifice, they would be welcome to a share in the possessions and privileges of their brethren on the other side. In reply the accused explained that their altar was not intended for sacrifice, but simply as a witness that, although separated by the river, they were of the same faith as their brethren in Canaan. They had feared that in future years their children might be excluded from the tabernacle, as having no part in Israel. Then this altar, erected after the pattern of the altar of the Lord at Shiloh, would be a witness that its builders were also worshipers of the living God. With great joy the ambassadors accepted this explanation, and immediately carried back the tidings to those who sent them. All thoughts of war were dismissed, and the people united in rejoicing and praise to God. (Patriarch and Prophets, pg 519)

They also inscribed the altar with its purpose, hoping to prevent future misapprehension and to remove what might be a cause of temptation.

How often serious difficulties arise from a simple misunderstanding, even among those who are actuated by the worthiest motives; and without the exercise of courtesy and forbearance, what serious and even fatal results may follow...Instead of making courteous inquiry to learn the facts in the case, they had met their brethren with censure and condemnation. (Again, think social media comments sections.) While very sensitive to the least blame in regard to their

own course, many are too severe in dealing with those whom they suppose to be in error. **No one was ever reclaimed from a wrong position by censure and reproach; but many are thus driven further from the right path and led to harden their hearts against conviction. A spirit of kindness, a courteous, forbearing deportment may save the erring and hide a multitude of sins.** (Patriarch and Prophets, pg 519)

Listen to this next part and think about whether you can relate as a member of this class:

The wisdom displayed by the Reubenites and their companions is worthy of imitation. While honestly seeking to promote the cause of true religion, they were misjudged and severely censured; yet they manifested no resentment. They listened with courtesy and patience to the charges before attempting to make their defense, and then fully explained their motives and showed their innocence...Even under false accusation those who are in the right can afford to be calm and considerate. God is acquainted with all that is misunderstood and misinterpreted by men, and we can safely leave our case in His hands. He will as surely vindicate the cause of those who put their trust in Him as He searched out the guilt of Achan. Those who are actuated by the spirit of Christ will possess that charity which suffers long and is kind. It is the will of God that union and brotherly love should exist among His people. The prayer of Christ just before His crucifixion was that His disciples might be one as He is one with the Father, that the world might believe that God had sent Him. This most touching and wonderful prayer reaches down the ages, even to our day; for His words were, ‘Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word.’ While we are not to sacrifice one principle of truth, it should be our constant aim to reach this state of unity. This is the evidence of our discipleship – ‘By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.’ (Patriarch and Prophets, pg 520)

And that brings us back around to Thanksgiving dinner around the table with differing beliefs, opinions, politics, doctrines...and our memory text “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”

Oprah’s latest podcast is entitled, “When Families Cut Ties – Exploring the Rising Trend of Going No Contact With Your Family”...it’s been out for three days, has ~2.5 million views on YouTube, and estimates a third of Americans has cut off ties or is estranged from their family.

What an incredibly sad statistic. What do you think about this trend and what’s causing it?

Don’t get me wrong, I have experienced it and have initiated it so I know that there are times and situations where those boundaries are totally appropriate and healthy...but I also know that we have

become much less tolerant and more combative, and as usual I'm guessing that those stats on Christians are similar to non-Christians...and I know that when there is no contact, no conversation, no dialogue, there is also no reconciliation.

Thursday's lesson lists some helpful principles for communication, resolving disagreements, and conflict resolution:

It is best to communicate rather than suppressing our observations/concerns until they explode. Lead with curiosity (versus trying to win a debate) – seek to understand before being understood. Agree before you disagree – “You’re right” are powerful words in de-escalation.

- Be willing to make a sacrifice in order to achieve unity.
- When accused, falsely or rightly, give a gentle answer that turns away wrath.
- Rejoice and bless God when peace is reestablished.