

## LESSON 5

October 4, 2026

# Unit I: From Nomadic Tribes to Settled People

## Do Not Conform to the World

DEVOTIONAL READING: Jeremiah 31:27-34

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: Joshua 23-24

PRINT PASSAGE: Joshua 24:18-27

### KEY VERSE

And put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. (Joshua 24:14b, KJV)

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Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. (Joshua 24:14b, NIV)

### Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Make worship a priority in their lives.
- Identify the idols that distract them from God.
- Strive not to be diverted from faithful living.

### \*Key Terms

**Chosen (verse 22)**—Hebrew: *bâchar* (baw-khar'): selected; elected; appointed; decided for. This word is a volitional commitment indicating a deliberate act of allegiance. The people of Israel were witnesses in their choosing to follow the Lord only.

**Covenant (verse 25)**—Hebrew: *berîyth* (ber-eeth'): a treaty, alliance, pledge; a binding agreement; a binding relational commitment, often sealed with obligations, signs, witnesses, and sometimes sacrifice. In Scripture, it describes God's formal relationship with His people, marked by loyalty, faithfulness, and divine initiative. One was made between the people of Israel and Joshua, stating that they would serve the Lord over the gods of the land.

**Jealous (verse 19)**—Hebrew: *qannôw'* (kan-no'): zealous; passionately protective. God's jealousy underscores His covenant claim on Israel and His intolerance of idolatry.

**Statute(s) (verse 25)**—Hebrew: *chôq* (khole): prescribed ordinance(s); prescribed task(s); "decrees" (NIV). Statutes were a part of the covenantal framework that Israel must obey.

**Witness (verse 27)**—Hebrew: *'édâh* (ay-daw'): testimony; the Hebrew word carries the sense



### The Biblical Context

Joshua 24 records a covenant renewal near the end of Joshua's life. Joshua gathers the Israelites and calls them to remember the Lord's faithfulness and to choose their loyalty with honesty. This moment is not a casual speech. It is a public decision that defines what kind of community they will become in the land (Wray Beal, 255-257).

Joshua's warning reflects a spiritual reality. Every people serve something. Some serve the Lord with devotion. Others serve the values and gods of the surrounding culture. In Canaan, many believed that other gods could provide prosperity, protection, or success. Joshua insists that the Hebrews cannot combine loyalty to the Lord with worship shaped by other powers (Coote, 614-615).

The passage also sets the stage for Judges. Joshua's final appeal shows that knowing God's past acts is not enough. Faithfulness must be practiced daily, or drift will follow. Joshua therefore speaks as a shepherd of the people. He calls them to make their devotion visible through obedience and to remove what competes with the Lord (Coogan and Chapman, 209).

This context speaks to discipleship. Gratitude for God's past work should lead to present commitment. Joshua's words invite adults to examine their loyalties, to name what competes with faithfulness, and to live with clear devotion to God in everyday life.

of public, accountable testimony. A witness is not passive—it stands to verify, affirm, or testify to the truth of an agreement, event, or obligation. Joshua told the people that they served as witnesses to choosing to serve the Lord instead of household gods.

**\*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)**

### Introduction

Many adults have learned that choices shape the direction of a life. Some choices are public and dramatic. Many are quiet and repeated, like what we give our attention to, what we depend on for security, and what we treat as most important. Over time, those choices form our habits, our values, and our character.

The Israelites faced a similar moment of decision. They had crossed the Jordan, survived conflict, and settled into a new chapter. Yet Joshua understood that the greatest danger was not only outside them. It was within them. Living among other peoples would expose them to other gods, other practices, and other ways of thinking. In time, those influences could feel normal, familiar, and even harmless.

Joshua gathered the people and pressed them toward clarity. He reminded them of what the Lord had done and called them to serve God with sincerity. This lesson is not only for ancient Israel. It is a call for believers and seekers today to consider what shapes the heart and what guides daily life. As you study Joshua's words, consider the voices that compete for your loyalty. Ask what it looks like to serve the Lord with a whole heart in the world you live in right now.

## ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

## Remembering What the Lord Has Done (*Joshua 24:18-20*)

### KJV

**18 And the LORD drave out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt in the land: therefore will we also serve the LORD; for he is our God.**

**19 And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the LORD: for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.**

**20 If ye forsake the LORD, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he hath done you good.**

### NIV

**18 And the LORD drove out before us all the nations, including the Amorites, who lived in the land. We too will serve the LORD, because he is our God.”**

**19 Joshua said to the people, “You are not able to serve the LORD. He is a holy God; he is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins.**

**20 If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after he has been good to you.”**

The people begin with testimony. They remember that the Lord drove out enemies and preserved them, and they respond, “We will serve the LORD.” Their words show that memory can lead to worship. When people remember what God has done, gratitude becomes a natural response (Buttrick, 628). Joshua does not allow them to treat this commitment lightly. He reminds them that the Lord is holy and that God’s covenant is serious. Joshua’s warning is not meant to push them into fear. It is meant to move them toward sincerity. Serving the Lord is not like joining a club. It is giving God first place.

Joshua also gives a sober warning. If the people turn away and serve other gods, consequences will follow. Joshua is teaching that God’s covenant includes both blessing and accountability. The Lord has done them good, and abandoning the Lord will bring harm. This is not because God is unstable. It is because divided worship breaks the relationship God created them for (Brueggemann, 120-121). Many people want the blessings of faith without the discipline of faithfulness. Joshua calls for a deeper response. He reminds the community that God is not a tool for success. God is the Lord who deserves loyalty. Remembering God’s past deliverance is meant to shape present devotion. This passage invites us to ask whether our service to God is sincere and whether we are willing to turn from whatever competes with the Lord.

### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

**What has God brought you through that you cannot take credit for? Write one sentence of thanks and gratitude, then read it aloud.**

## Choosing Faithfulness over Familiar Idols (*Joshua 24:21-24*)

### KJV

21 And the people said unto Joshua, Nay; but we will serve the LORD.

22 And Joshua said unto the people, Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the LORD, to serve him. And they said, We are witnesses.

23 Now therefore put away, said he, the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart unto the LORD God of Israel.

24 And the people said unto Joshua, The LORD our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey.

### NIV

21 But the people said to Joshua, “No! We will serve the LORD.”

22 Then Joshua said, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the LORD.”

“Yes, we are witnesses,” they replied.

23 “Now then,” said Joshua, “throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel.”

24 And the people said to Joshua, “We will serve the LORD our God and obey him.”

The people insist again that they will serve the Lord. Joshua presses them toward responsibility by calling them witnesses against themselves. In other words, their own words will stand as testimony. Faithfulness is not only private. It is public. It is a commitment the community must live out together (Keck, 618). Joshua then gives a practical instruction: put away the strange gods among you and incline your heart to the Lord. This shows that repentance is not only feeling sorry. It is turning. It is removing what competes with God and choosing a new direction. Adults understand this. When a habit is harming a life, change requires action. This was the case for Joshua who called for visible change that matched spoken commitment.

There is also an important message about how idols can become familiar. They may be inherited from family history, borrowed from surrounding culture, or kept because they feel useful. Joshua exposes the danger of divided loyalty. Serving the Lord cannot be mixed with serving what is false. For today's students, this passage invites careful examination. What competes with God in your life? It may not look religious. It may be money, approval, control, bitterness, or comfort. The question is simple. What do you lean on most? What do you obey most? Joshua calls the people to incline their hearts to the Lord. That means turning attention and trust toward God daily. This is how covenant commitment becomes real in ordinary life.

### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What is one “strange god” that can quietly compete with God in your life today? Name it, then write one step you can take this week.

## Living Out Our Commitment to the Lord (*Joshua 24:25-27*)

### KJV

25 So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and set them a statute and an ordinance in Shechem.

26 And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God, and took a great stone, and set it up there under an oak, that was by the sanctuary of the LORD.

27 And Joshua said unto all the people, Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us; for it hath heard all the words of the LORD which he spake unto us: it shall be therefore a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God.

### NIV

25 On that day Joshua made a covenant for the people, and there at Shechem he reaffirmed for them decrees and laws.

26 And Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the Law of God. Then he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak near the holy place of the Lord.

27 “See!” he said to all the people. “This stone will be a witness against us. It has heard all the words the Lord has said to us. It will be a witness against you if you are untrue to your God.”

Joshua moves from decision to structure. He makes a covenant with the people, sets a statute and ordinance, writes the words, and raises a witness stone. These actions teach that faithfulness must be supported over time. Commitment is strengthened when it is remembered, recorded, and reinforced (Wray Beal, 261-262).

The witness stone is not an object of worship. It is a reminder. The stone stands where the community gathered, so that the people will not pretend later that they never heard God’s call. Adults understand the value of reminders. People set alarms, write notes, and mark important dates so they do not drift from what matters. Joshua uses a simple, public witness to help the people stay aligned with their words. Joshua also warns them not to deny their God. Denial can happen through speech, but also through living as if God is not Lord. This warning is not meant to shame. It is meant to protect. When people forget God, they become vulnerable to compromise.

What helps you remember your commitment to God? What habits support devotion? Worship, prayer, Scripture reading, service, and honest community can strengthen faithfulness. Joshua shows that covenant life is not sustained by emotion alone. It is sustained by choices and practices that keep God’s word in view. The Lord calls us to live what we say we believe.

### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What “witness” could help you stay faithful and committed this week? Choose one reminder, write it down, and place it where you will see it daily.

## A Closing Thought

Joshua calls the Israelites to remember the Lord's faithfulness and respond with sincere devotion. The people confess what God has done, but Joshua warns them that covenant life cannot be casual or divided. Faithfulness requires turning from competing loyalty and living out commitment with visible obedience. Joshua records the covenant and sets a witness so the community will remember what it has chosen. This lesson invites believers today to resist conforming to the world and to serve the Lord with a whole heart.

## Your Life

List one area where your loyalty to God has become inconsistent. Choose one practice that strengthens faithfulness, such as daily prayer, Scripture reading, or turning off a distraction. Do it each day this week. At week's end, write one sentence about what changed in your heart or habits.

## Your World!

Someone you know may be drifting without noticing it. Share a brief story of a time God helped you return to faithfulness. Invite them to read Joshua 24 and talk with you about what it means to serve the Lord sincerely. Offer to pray with them and encourage them toward renewed trust.

## Closing Prayer

Lord, help us remember Your faithfulness and choose You above every rival loyalty. Strengthen our devotion and shape our daily habits to honor You. Keep us sincere and steady. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

## Conclusion

### (Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

The lesson topic for Sunday, October 11, 2026, is "Choosing Badly." The Devotional Reading is 1 Corinthians 10:1-14, the Background Reading is Judges 2, and the Printed Passage is Judges 2:6-15.

### Home Daily Bible Readings

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|----------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| MONDAY, October 5    | "Christ Died for All"                 | (Romans 5:1-10)        |
| TUESDAY, October 6   | "Grace Abounds Despite Our Sin"       | (Romans 5:11-21)       |
| WEDNESDAY, October 7 | "Worship God in the Chosen Sanctuary" | (Deuteronomy 12:1-14)  |
| THURSDAY, October 8  | "Reject Unworthy Forms of Worship"    | (Deuteronomy 12:20-32) |
| FRIDAY, October 9    | "Reject Earthly Desires"              | (Colossians 3:1-11)    |
| SATURDAY, October 10 | "Clothe Yourself with Godliness"      | (Colossians 3:12-17)   |
| SUNDAY, October 11   | "God Is Faithful Anyway"              | (Judges 2:1-15)        |