***Grace Group Guide***

***Joshua Chapter 5***

***Final Steps of Preparation***

One of my favorite passages in the Old Testament is found in Exodus 33. To set the stage for it, let me share some background. The people have been led out of Egypt, and are journeying (for the first time) to the land of Canaan. But in Exodus 32, we read about the debacle with the golden calf. Moses was up on the mount with God, receiving the 10 commandments and when he comes back down the mountain, the people are worshipping a golden calf. God, and Moses, are thoroughly displeased with the people.

Nevertheless, the journey is to resume and in Exodus 33:1-3 God makes a statement to Moses that would have been interpreted very differently by different people. He says **“Then the Lord spoke to Moses, “Depart, go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought up from the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, ‘To your descendants I will give it.’ 2I will send an angel before you and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite and the Jebusite. 3*Go up* to a land flowing with milk and honey; for I will not go up in your midst, because you are an obstinate people, and I might destroy you on the way.”**

I say that this would have been received differently by different people because some would have been thrilled to death that they were going to receive the inheritance of the land and experience God’s provision along the way but not actually have to follow through with the worship that went along with that. In other words, they were going to get all the goods and benefits of a relationship with God without having to invest in that relationship. Many people have a shallow view of God, where they want to enjoy His blessing and the benefits of a relationship with Him, without actually having one. It’s an approach that is very self-centered. I have to wonder, how many of the Israelite people would have heard this and said, “Alrighty then, thanks for the help along the way!”, and then carried on in their own power and strength. In fact, I think that question answers itself once the people get to the land and hear back from the twelve spies sometime later.

But Moses was not like most of the Israelites. He was different. He knew that were it not for the Lord their God, they would still be back in Egypt as slaves. He also knew that were it not for God, they wouldn’t stand a chance. So in that connection, I LOVE what Moses says in verse 15: **“If Your presence does not go with us, do not lead us up from here.”** That was a plea directed towards God’s statement in verse 3.

**Have there been times in your life when the immediate future looked like smooth sailing and caused you to feel like you didn’t need the Lord as much as you used to?**

I couldn’t help but think back to this verse this past week as I studied the ending verses of Joshua 5. We don’t know exactly what Joshua was doing off by himself. I would imagine he was strategizing. Or perhaps he was seeking the Lord’s guidance and direction for what to do next. Perhaps the weight of what lay ahead was beginning to weigh heavily upon him. Either way, I can imagine his surprise when he looks up and out of nowhere appears an angel of the Lord – and not just any angel of the Lord, but the captain of the host of the Lord. Most likely, this is a Christophany, an appearance of the pre-incarnate Christ.

Look at verse 14. When Joshua asks, “Are you for us, or for our enemies?”, the response is “No.” He was essentially saying, “I didn’t come to take sides. I came to take over.”

Hampton Keathly suggests “*As the One who had come to take charge, the Lord was also reminding Joshua (and us) of both God’s****personal presence****and His****powerful******provision****, the provision of His vast hosts. The promise of God’s personal presence always carries with it the assurance of God’s personal care. Likewise, the promise of His powerful provision always carries with it the promise of His infinite supply and power no matter how impossible the problem may appear to us. So there was more, infinitely more, than Joshua’s army. There was Joshua and his army, but there was also the myriads of God’s angelic forces who always stand ready to do God’s bidding and to serve the saints.*

Three other passages can serve as helpful examples that we might grasp the issue here and its significance to our daily walk. 1)  2 Kings 6:8-17 2) Matthew 26:53 3)  Hebrews 1:14

Keathly continues *“… And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and bowed down, and said to him, “What has my lord to say to his servant?” (vs. 14b).*

*How we each need this response—the response of worship and submission. He quickly got the picture. Joshua had been thinking of a conflict between the Israelite and the Canaanite armies. Perhaps he had been thinking of this as****his****battle. Certainly, he felt the weight of responsibility on his shoulders. But after being confronted by the divine Commander, he was reminded of a truth he heard Moses declare many years earlier when they stood on the banks of the Red Sea. There Moses said, “The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still” (**Ex. 14:14**). Joshua learned afresh the truth that David would learn and declare when facing Goliath, “the battle is the Lord’s” (**1 Sam. 17:47**).*

*But that’s not all. As an outworking of his worship and submission, we see Joshua’s inquiry, the inquiry of a servant looking to his Commander for direction, “What has my lord to say to his servant?” Do you remember Paul’s response on the Damascus road, when he came to realize it was the glorified Lord who was speaking to him? He quickly answered, “What shall I do, Lord?” (**Acts. 22:10**).*

*What a comfort and how encouraging to know that we never have to bear our burdens or face our enemies alone. Joshua was to know that the battles ahead and the entire conquest of Canaan was really God’s conflict. What is our part? We are soldiers in His army, His servants for whom He abundantly supplies the armor of God (**Eph. 6:10-18**).”*

**Have you experienced either of these struggles in your own life?** Perhaps you felt like everything was up to you and you had to make things happen and win all the battles yourself. Perhaps you took the path of the prodigal in Luke 15. He had lots of material possession and wealth, so he set out on his own with no regard for his father or anyone else. I think that mentality relates back to what we saw in Exodus – regardless of the provision, if God didn’t go with them, Moses didn’t want to go.

If I could give you some encouragement for the journey, the leadership at Grace loves this quote from Henry Blackaby in his work “Experiencing God,” “Find out where God is at work, and join Him there.” Joshua didn’t need to initiate the battle and then get the Lord to join his cause. He needed to wait on the Lord and *then* join the Lord’s cause.