

Study Guide



Joshua 20:1-21:45— May 14, 2017

Cities of Refuge and Levites & Summary

Welcome (40 Minutes)

Be intentional to have authentic relationships...

Worship (5 Minutes)

As the group transitions from of a time of fellowship to a time of intentional study of the word, it is important to facilitate that transition with a time of worship. This can look like praying together, singing songs together, or rejoicing in what the Lord has done throughout the week.

Word (45 Minutes)

As we walk through Joshua we are going to see how Joshua relates to our everyday battle of faithfulness. **Our aim and our prayer for this study is to gain the wisdom we need for the battle of faithfulness.** During our time in Joshua we will be adapting our study guide from [Crossway's book, Knowing the Bible: Joshua, A 12-Week Study](#) by Trent Hunter. We recommend you purchase this book and use it in your Community Groups and for personal study as we go through Joshua. We have copies of the book available in our bookstore.

For further study on this weeks study please check out the following pages...

Walk Prayer & Missions

South Sudan & NOLA Baptist— For further information visit norriferrychurch.org or contact Jared Clary (clary@norriferrychurch.org)

Please see the list of local ministries under the "Walk" section below.

Calendar

May 14th— Happy Mother's Day!
May 26th-31st— [Student Life Camp](#)
May 29th-July 2nd— Camp in the City
June 10th— Serve Shreveport
June 11th— Master Plan Meeting
July 11th-16th— [Fort Worth Mission Trip](#)

Welcome (40 Minutes)

As you fellowship with one another, please be intentional about sharing what the Lord is doing in your lives. Get to know one another and encourage one another. Are your conversations pointing one another toward Christ?

Worship (5 Minutes)

If you are looking for a song to sing this week, here are the lyrics to "[Jesus, Firm Foundation](#)":

How firm a foundation, you saints of the lord
Is laid for your faith in his excellent word
What more can he say than to you he has said
To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled

Fear not, he is with us, oh be not dismayed
For he is our god, our sustainer and strength
He'll be our defender and cause us to stand
Upheld by his merciful, almighty hand

How firm, our foundation
How sure, our salvation
And we will not be shaken
Jesus, firm foundation

The soul that is trusting in Jesus as lord
Will press on enduring the darkest of storm
And though even hell should endeavor to shake
He'll never, no never, no no never forsake
He'll never, no never, no no never forsake

How firm, our foundation
How sure, our salvation
And we will not be shaken
Jesus, firm foundation

Age to age he stands
Faithful to the end
All may fade away
But he will remain
He will remain!

How firm, our foundation
How sure, our salvation
And we will not be shaken
Jesus, firm foundation.

Commentary

Joshua 20 & 21 gives us a closer look at life in the land for Israel in two areas, criminal justice and worship, based on what Moses had said they should do when they entered the land. At first glance, as with other parts of Joshua, it may appear there isn't much here for the New Testament Christian. But with some reflection, there is much to learn. This section closes with a God-exalting summary of all that has happened to this point.

The Lord takes the initiative and commands Joshua and Israel to follow through on instructions given to Moses for setting aside cities of refuge (see. Num. 35:9-34; Deut. 4:41-43; 19:1-13). **Such cities were to serve as temporary and/or ongoing places of asylum for those guilty of unintentional manslaughter; they were a provision for the one who wipes out a human life unintentionally and without designing to do so (vs. 3).** A certain view of human beings undergirds all of Joshua 20. According to Genesis 1:27, "God created man in his own image." Human beings are like God in important ways, representing him in the world. An affront to any human being is an affront to God. This is why death is given as a penalty for murder (Gen. 9:6; James 3:9). **The inestimable worth of humanity could not be clearer than on the cross of Christ. There Jesus, having become fully human, died a human death for the redemption of human beings (Heb. 2:14).**

In Chapter 21 we see the Levites are allotted their territory. **The Levites are finally spread around the land, this should call to mind their specific function in the life of Israel: to instruct the people in the Word and represent the people to God through the tabernacle and the sacrificial system.** Every sacrifice offered for sin was a reminder of sin, its penalty, and the inadequacy of animal sacrifices to make atonement (Heb. 10:3-4). At the end of Joshua 21, verse 45 is a sweeping description of how well things have gone for Israel: "Not one word of all the good promises that the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed." But since Canaanite land and inhabitants remain unconquered, is this statement true (23:1-5)? Some say Joshua is really a patchwork of material stitched together without a divine author behind it, but an understanding of literary genre can help us grasp the coherence of God's Word: Joshua is a work of prophetic history. **That is, this is history with a theological purpose. If we assume one author, we must assume this writer meant us to interpret any given part of the book in light of the whole: of course there is unfinished business, but the point of emphasis is the Lord's faithfulness to his promises.**

Discussion

1. Read Joshua chapter 20: 1-9. This chapter tells about Joshua setting up the cities of refuge according to the instructions that Moses gave while he was alive. Also read Numbers 35:9-34 which contains the instructions that Moses gave. What was the purpose of the cities of refuge?
2. What criteria were used to determine which people were eligible to be protected in the cities of refuge and which people were not eligible to be protected from the avenger of blood?

3. How did the accidental killer gain access to the city of refuge? Did he ever undergo a trial after he gained access to the city of refuge?
4. What happened if the accidental killer left the city of refuge while the presiding priest was still alive?
5. What similarities do you see in this system of justice for dealing with murder compared to what we practice in the United States today? What differences do you see?
6. How does Jesus function like a city of refuge for Christians (Hebrews 6:17-19)? Jesus is a refuge from what?
7. Read Joshua 21:1-3. In these verses the families of the Levites (the tribe of Israel that were the priests) came to Joshua to receive cities to live in along with the surrounding pasture lands. Who actually gave the individual cities and surrounding pasture lands to the Levites (vs. 3 & 8)? Why do you think the people gave the cities to the Levites instead of Joshua?
8. As you read further, you find that each tribe gave some of their cities to the Levites (priests) for them to live in. What effect did this procedure have upon the distribution of priests among the people (vs. 41)?

Application

1. What is the repeated message of Joshua 21: 43-45? How do verses 43-45 apply to our situation as Christians living in 2017? Meditate on 2 Corinthians 1:18-20. How should the promises of Jesus affect the way we live our Christian lives right now? How should his promises affect our hope for the future? What are some promises of Jesus that you are depending upon right now in your present circumstances? Please share with your community group?

Walk (30 minutes)

After enjoying fellowship, worship, and time in God's word together, it is now time to pray together as a group and encourage one another in the faith. It is very easy for this portion of the group time to be consumed by the other portions. However, this segment of the group time is crucially important. It answers the question, how do we apply what we are learning in Joshua to our lives today?

Many groups have found that it is helpful to sometimes break up into a men's group and a women's group for the purpose of being able to be more transparent and honest as we encourage one another and keep one another accountable. I encourage you to try this in your groups.

In addition to praying for, and encouraging, one another, this portion of the group time should also be used for planning how your group can participate in God's work outside the walls of our church – "neighbors and nations." Discuss with your group some ideas on how you can be intentional with building relationships with your neighbors and co-workers. What can your Community Group do to impact the area around you?

Here is a list of local ministries Norris Ferry is actively involved in:

Hub/purchased
Young life
Heart of hope
First priority
Ark-la-Tex crisis pregnancy center
Community renewal
Grief counseling
Celebrate recovery
Samaritan counseling
Last call ministries
Golden age ministries
Rescue mission
Luke's lighthouse
FCA

May the Lord bless and encourage you as you are in your groups this week! Know that we are praying for you on a weekly basis and that we are here to help you in any way that we can!