



**Crossing Jordan V**  
**Getting Out of No Man's Land**  
**Joshua 5**  
**Week of March 6th, 2016**

**Objective of this study:** To understand where you are at and where God is seeking to take/grow/transform you.

[Remember, the main goal of each Growth Group is to allow God's Word to change your heart so that others would see Jesus in you and be likewise changed to be like him. He wants to change the world through us]

**Worship (5 – 10 minutes)**

- A. Sing a song or two of praise and thanksgiving to God.
- B. Spend five minutes in silence asking God to prepare your heart for how he wants to speak to you.
- C. After the five minutes have someone interrupt the silence and read Psalm 47. meditatively to the group. Pause after each phrase letting God speak to you.

Welcome

What are some of your hobbies/activities that fill your tank (that you find enjoyable/energizing)?

**Word (20 - 30 minutes)**

- A. What stood out from the sermon?
- B. Read Joshua chapter 5.
- C. What jumps out at you in this passage?
- D. How is God the hero here (verse 1 and 13-15)? How did that affect Joshua's leadership? How did the people respond? How did Joshua respond?
- E. How does obedience and trust impact the Israelites in this chapter?

**Work (30-45 minutes)**

**A. God is at work preparing hearts.**

Sermon Quote: "Which says to me that **our obedience will have eternal impact on those around us.**"

What does the quote have to do with **Joshua 5:1** and my life? Who is God calling on you to reach out to? What is God calling you to do?

**B. We have to give up the right to self-rule.**

**Sermon Quote:** "We need a circumcision, not of the flesh, but one of the heart. There needs to be a definite line of demarcation that says my heart is God's. I am no longer in charge of my destiny – as if I ever was."

What does the quote have to do with **1 Cor 6:19-20**? How does this play out in my life? What is Jesus pointing out to me right now (You can stop and pray at any point here)?

**C. God is good for his promises.**

Why is Joshua 5:10 important for the Israelites? What did it signify? What promises of God do you cling to? What promises of God are you not trusting in?

**D. God will give us a heart after him if we step out in obedience.**

**Sermon quote:** “That is what God wants to do with us. He wants our hearts so moved by him that the only thing we see in front of us are the things he deems are important. Those other things that you once thought were so very essential and were willing to fight for will seem silly.”

How does this play out in your life? Where have you seen your “ought to’s” change to “want to’s”? In light of the mission he has for us, what is something silly you still hold on to?

**E. God will give us what we need.**

**Phil 4:19 (NLT)**

***19 And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus.***

Discuss how this relates to this passage and to our lives? What things impact my belief/trust of God on this point?

**F. It is God’s agenda not ours.**

**Joshua 24:14–15 (NLT)**

***14 “So fear the Lord and serve him wholeheartedly. Put away forever the idols your ancestors worshiped when they lived beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord alone. 15 But if you refuse to serve the Lord, then choose today whom you will serve. Would you prefer the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates? Or will it be the gods of the Amorites in whose land you now live? But as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord.”***

How does this passage relate to Joshua 5:13-15? Identify things agenda items that are in your life that are not God’s agenda? How would lives change (yours/those that God has called you to) if you put them away? What could God do with you/through you if you confessed them and lived out Joshua 24:14-15?

**[1]**  
**Getting Out of No-Man's Land**  
**Joshua 5**  
**March 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016, Jeff Germo**

I have recently heard about an area between North and South Korea that is called “no man’s land.” It has been officially named the Demilitarized Zone, or the DMZ. But, it really isn’t actually demilitarized, it’s the most heavily armed border on earth.

**[2]**

There are over two million soldiers stationed on either side of this no man’s land. And between the two sides is a land where no man dare to go. It ranges from 300 metres wide in some areas to 4 km wide by 250 km long. On the one side is North Korea, and on the other is lies the South. In between, nothing – neither North, nor South. The DMZ is monitored by a small army of Swiss and Swedish soldiers. There is a small bridge between the two sides that has been dubbed “The Bridge of No Return.”

**[3]**

Step on to it from either side and there is no turning back, if you survive. Former U.S. President Bill Clinton called this area the ‘scariest place on earth.’ Reading about this made me think of life in God’s kingdom. There is no DMZ, spiritually speaking. There is no ‘no man’s land,’ although, we sometimes like to live like there is. Near the end of Joshua’s life he put a question to the Israelite people. Essentially what he said to them was that there is no in between. You need to choose whom you are going to live for.

**[4]**

**Joshua 24:14–15 (NLT)**

***14 “So fear the Lord and serve him wholeheartedly. Put away forever the idols your ancestors worshiped when they lived beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord alone. 15 But if you refuse to serve the Lord, then choose today whom you will serve. Would you prefer the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates? Or will it be the gods of the Amorites in whose land you now live? But as for me and my family, we will serve the Lord.”***

Joshua says to them, “You are either in or you are out. Which is it?” Rewind back to the situation that we are looking at in Joshua 5. The Israelites have just come out of a ‘no man’s land’ of sorts. They were there for 40 years wandering aimlessly, neither in nor out, they thought, because they would not believe that God would be good for His promise to take the land across the Jordan that had been covenanted to Abraham. And now, finally after that generation had died off, they believe God, take a step of faith and cross the Jordan into the land of promise.

So, let’s pick it up where we left off. They have crossed the Jordan and are camped out waiting for Joshua to tell them what’s going to happen next. They have made a decision to come out of ‘no man’s land’ and into the promise land that God had already given them. Chapter five of Joshua is about God preparing His people for the victory that He had already given them.

There are several things that we need to know and do if we are going to live in the victory that God has given us in fulfilling His mission. And some of these things we have already covered before, but they are worth repeating.

**[5]**

**1. God is at work preparing the hearts of the people in the land that He has given us.**

Verse 1 says that all of their enemies in Canaan were paralyzed by fear because of what they had heard God did for His people.

**[6]**

**Joshua 5:1 (NLT)**

***1 When all the Amorite kings west of the Jordan and all the Canaanite kings who lived along the Mediterranean coast heard how the Lord had dried up the Jordan River so the people of Israel could cross, they lost heart and were paralyzed with fear because of them.***

This is not just a passing comment. God worked in the hearts of the Canaanites so the mission that he had given His people would be a success. This fear that was in the hearts of the people in Canaan was strategically important and would give the Israelites some time to do what God would tell them to do next.

Had the Israelites decided to disobey God and stay on the East side of the Jordan instead of believing he would be good to his word and given the Israelites to the people of Canaan. They would not have had the opportunity to see God's hand at work. They would have marched over to the Jordan and defeated the Israelites.

**[7]**

Which says to me that **our obedience will have eternal impact on those around us.**

In verses two and three God commands Joshua to circumcise the entire male population of Israelites. They would be basically incapacitated for several days. God struck fear into the hearts of the people west of the Jordan so the Israelites would have a time of peace in which they could circumcise all the males. If that fear was not there Israel would have been sitting ducks while the men were recuperating from their operations. The question is, why was it so important for this to be done?

Well, the former generation had wandered for 40 years in 'no man's land' because they failed to believe God would give them the land. They chose to wander aimlessly rather than cross the Jordan even though God had told them numerous times that He had already given them victory. What did circumcision symbolize to Israel?

It signified a complete separation from the sins of the flesh that were so prevalent in those days, adultery, sodomy, fornication... It symbolized not only a separation **from** sexual sins, but also a separation **unto** the LORD. In other words, that they were set apart unto God. Their lives are no longer their own. By this rite of circumcision they are saying, "I give up my right to self-rule. I belong to God, totally and one hundred percent for His service."

**[8]**

**Deuteronomy 30:6 (NLT)**

***6 “The Lord your God will change [circumcise] your heart and the hearts of all your descendants, so that you will love him with all your heart and soul and so you may live!***

**[9]**

I’m going to share a story of from Jeff’s childhood Jeff says this: When I was young every summer I would go to a little Bible Camp in the middle of ‘nowhere’ Saskatchewan. The camp was in a small oasis of trees in basically a desert area. I went there for probably 10 or 15 years and I don’t remember anything that I was taught in the classes that we had.

I don’t remember anything that was said in the chapel services that we had every evening. But, I do remember one thing that was said by an elderly man in a testimony service.

I was probably about 12 years old or so and it has stuck with me to this day. Usually I didn’t listen very well during these services. My friends and I would spend our time passing notes and digging holes in the sand floor of the chapel with our feet. This elderly man who was very respected and revered by everyone stood up with the help of his cane.

He waited for a few seconds while he got his composure and in a very clear voice so everyone heard it he said, “The Bible says that we are to love God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind.” And then he paused for a few seconds, and he continued. “I really don’t know if I love God like that. If we really loved God with all our hearts wouldn’t it show in how we lived?”

And then he sat down, and there was total silence in that old chapel. As I sat there in silence his words plagued me. If this godly and upright man says that about himself, what does it say about me? Do I really love God? The chapel speaker had no idea what to say after this, and so he told everyone that the alter was open and we could go to the front and pray if we wanted to.

One by one people began to file toward the front. And then the tears started to flow, and it began a revival of sorts in the hearts of men and women and boys and girls. And I went forward that night and gave my heart to the Lord.

That is what circumcision meant to the Jews. With that ceremonial act they were saying, ‘I and my household will choose to love you above all else.’ They had just spent 40 years wandering in ‘no-man’s land, stuck in the status quo. And now, finally they say, ‘enough.’ I will no longer be satisfied with life as usual. My heart and my life belong to God. I give up the right to self-rule. If we are going to have victory with the call that God has for our lives we have to do the same.

**[10]**

## **2. We have to give up the right to self-rule.**

We need a circumcision, not of the flesh, but one of the heart. There needs to be a definite line of demarcation that says my heart is God’s. I am no longer in charge of my destiny – as if I ever was.

**[11]**

## **1 Corinthians 6:19–20 (NLT)**

***19 Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, 20 for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.***

Our, heart, our mind, our body, our whole lives as Christ-followers belongs to God. We say, "I gave my heart to the Lord at such and such an age." But, we have a tendency to think that it ended there at our justification. Our heart is either God's or it is ours. We can't take it back. It was bought at a very huge price.

The Israelites had been wandering in no-man's land for forty years. They refused to believe that God would be able to fulfill His promises to them, and in essence what they said to him was, "We'll handle our life on our own terms." So He let them.

And during those wandering years God's covenant with His people was suspended and the mark of circumcision was not needed.

If we decide that our heart is ours to do with as we please, he will let us go our own way, but we will wander aimlessly in a no-man's land until we come to the end of ourselves and finally get to the point of trusting him for his promises.

The next thing that I want to draw your attention to is in verse 9.

[12]

**Joshua 5:9 (NLT)**

***9 Then the Lord said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the shame of your slavery in Egypt." So that place has been called Gilgal to this day.***

Now, that is the New Living Translation's rendering of the verse.

The ESV says it differently.

[13]

***9 And the LORD said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you."***

The original language of Hebrew doesn't actually say the shame or reproach "of their slavery" in Egypt. It simply says "their shame (or reproach) of Egypt. I don't think it is referring to their shame of being slaves. I think what it is referring to is the shame of their sin of not believing God at Kadesh Barnea when he told them to cross over and they did not believe that he was big enough to take care of them. Their disbelief led them to whining and complaining about things that distracted them from the mission of God.

And so they ended up wandering around in 'no-man's land' for forty years. Remember in Exodus 32 when Moses argued that God would lose his glory in Egypt if he destroyed the Israelites because of their unbelief? In Numbers 14 he used the same argument.

Moses didn't want word to spread to Egypt that the God of Israel couldn't finish what he started. Their sin of not believing God at Kadesh Barnea when he told them to take the land was a reproach to them. They carried that shame. But, now it was in the past.

They had crossed over and God said, ***“There is no reason to feel shame any longer.”***

They believed God, stepped out of ‘no man’s land’ and into the promise of God. Now, the question is, would God be good to his Word? The Israelites have just crossed over the Jordan River. They are camped out on the West side. They are in enemy territory. It is an extremely hostile time. If they are going to take this time to consecrate themselves through circumcision they would have to trust God.

**[14]**

They would have to know that,

### **3. God was good for his promise.**

It’s the same for us in 2016 at Campbell River Baptist Church. If we are going to fulfill the mission God has for us we need to know this. Because they believed it this time, they were able to cross the Jordan, go into a hostile land, knowing that God is bigger than their obstacles.

The next thing I want you to notice is from verse 10.

**[15]**

#### **Joshua 5:10 (NLT)**

***<sup>10</sup> While the Israelites were camped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, they celebrated Passover on the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month.***

This is the first time in 40 years that they had celebrated Passover. God had originally told them that Passover was supposed to be a lasting ordinance. They were to celebrate it regularly. They were never to forget that they were a redeemed people, set free by the blood of the passover lamb.

Remember the story? The last of the ten plagues that would finally free them from slavery was that God’s angel of death was going to slay the first born of everyone in Egypt except those who brushed the blood of the a lamb on their doorposts. The angel would passover those homes. That’s why the Jews celebrate Passover, to remember that time. So, this is a very momentous time for these people, sitting on the west side of the Jordan, after crossing over, remembering who made it all possible and what their lives were all about.

The thing I want you to notice here is that the Israelites took a step of faith by believing God and crossing the Jordan. What happened next?

**[16]**

Their hearts began to change. That’s what God wants to do with us.

### **4. God will give us a heart after him if we step out in obedience.**

The things the Israelites thought were worth complaining about all of a sudden moved to periphery. In their 40 years of wandering in ‘no-man’s land’ they were concerned only for themselves. They had their own agendas. They whined and complained. They didn’t follow the or-

dinances that God had given them. They weren't about God's business. They were distracted with whining and complaining about things that were not important.

When they finally decided to take the step of faith and believe God he gave them hearts after him. The things that are important to God became important to them.

That is what God wants to do with us. He wants our hearts so moved by him that the only thing we see in front of us are the things he deems are important. Those other things that you once thought were so very essential and were willing to fight for will seem silly.

Why is this true? Because your focus will be on the mission of Jesus, not on the mission of self. Friends, we need to ask ourselves, daily, why do I get up in the morning? What is my *raison d'être*? What is the motive for the things I do? Why do I fight about the things I fight about? Is Jesus the focus of my day? Or do other things take up space and push him out?

God wants our hearts, friends. What is your heart set on?

[17]

***<sup>11</sup> The very next day they began to eat unleavened bread and roasted grain harvested from the land. <sup>12</sup> No manna appeared on the day they first ate from the crops of the land, and it was never seen again. So from that time on the Israelites ate from the crops of Canaan.***

Can you imagine what this must have been like for them? For forty years their menu consisted of manna. Manna goulash, manna helper, manna pancakes, manna lasagna. How many creative ways can you cook with manna? Every day it was the same. "O no, not manna again."

And now all of a sudden no manna, and they begin to eat the fruit of the land.

[18]

My next point here is that,

**5. God will give you what you need.**

**Philippians 4:19 (NLT)**

***<sup>19</sup> And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus.***

How many of our needs will he meet? All of them. That is a promise he is good for. For forty years God met the Israelites needs for food with manna. And all of a sudden it stopped. Why? Because they no longer needed it.

If God calls you to something he guarantees he will give you everything you need to do the job.

One last point.

[19]



***13 When Joshua was near the town of Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with sword in hand. Joshua went up to him and demanded, “Are you friend or foe?” 14 “Neither one,” he replied. “I am the commander of the LORD’s army.”***  
**[20]**

***At this, Joshua fell with his face to the ground in reverence. “I am at your command,” Joshua said. “What do you want your servant to do?” 15 The commander of the LORD’s army replied, “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy.” And Joshua did as he was told.***

Who was this commander of the LORD’s army? Why did he tell him to take off his sandals? Joshua fell down and worshipped. Why didn’t the commander stop him from worshipping him? Because, I believe that this was a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus.

When Joshua asks if he is friend or foe he replies, ‘Neither one.’ What did He mean by this? Did he mean that he was not their friend? I don’t think so. I think what he was saying here is that he is not there to help Joshua with **his** agenda. Joshua gets a wake up call, a reminder that He is not in charge.

**[21]**

God has a plan. He’s had it since before time began. God is not here to assist us in building *our* church. He is going to build *his* church through us – if we let him.

## **6. It is God’s agenda not ours.**

God reminds me of this all the time. God says “Steve, this is my church. It’s not yours. It’s my youth group, It’s my agenda. It’s my timing. It’s my money. These are my people, not yours, and I will use them to build *my* church.”

If we are going to be successful at fulfilling the mission that God has given us we need to know:

- 1. God is at work preparing hearts.**
- 2. We have to give up the right to self-rule.**
- 3. God is good for his promises.**
- 4. God will give us a heart after him if we step out in obedience.**
- 5. God will give us what we need.**
- 6. It is God’s agenda not ours.**