



# Holy Living in the Promised Land

*Joshua 23–24*



## LESSON GOAL

Students will learn to obey God wholeheartedly while living in a sinful, idolatrous world.

## BIBLE TRUTHS

- By God's strength, Israel conquered the land.
- God fulfilled His promise to give Israel the land.
- Israel was warned not to follow other gods.
- If Israel worshiped other gods, they would be punished.
- Joshua told the people to be strong and serve the Lord.

## KEY VERSE

"And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15).

## APPLICATION

- Understand that God is faithful to keep His promises.
- Desire to love God.
- Do what God's Word says, no matter what others say.
- Choose trust in God and serve Him with all your heart.

### Symbol Key



Craft



Finger Play



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Center



Activity



Q & A



Age Group

4



## PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

*“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul.... You shall teach them to your children” (Deuteronomy 11:18–19).*

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here to aid you in understanding the Scripture.

### Bible Background

After God miraculously stopped the Jordan River and destroyed the walls of Jericho, Israel must have anticipated an easy conquest of the Promised Land. Those hopes crumbled when Israel was easily routed in their next battle against the city of Ai (Josh. 7:1–5). Joshua quickly blamed God, asking why God had brought Israel across the Jordan only to be killed and wishing that Israel had stayed in the land east of the Jordan (7:7–9). God revealed that Israel was under judgment because Achan had stolen from the plunder of Jericho. When Achan had been executed, the judgment upon Israel was removed, and Israel was again victorious in battle. Israel’s victory in battle continued until they had conquered the Promised Land and divided it among the tribes. Although the land had been taken, Israel had not yet eradicated the foreign nations living among the Israelites. In Joshua 23–24, Joshua warned Israel to not compromise with the nations but to serve the Lord wholeheartedly.

### Conquest and Division of the Promised Land: Joshua 21:43–45

After Israel dealt with the sin of Achan (Josh. 7), they were able to continue with God’s blessing of their conquest of the Promised Land. Israel killed the 12,000 inhabitants of Ai and burned down the city (Josh. 8:25, 28). The various Canaanite nations realized that they could no longer wait for Joshua and the Israelites to come and destroy their cities one by one. While the city of Gibeon tricked Israel into making peace with it (Josh. 9), the other Canaanite city-states joined forces to try to defeat Israel. Chapter 10 records how God granted Israel victory over five kings from the south. Israel was successful because “the LORD God of Israel fought for Israel” (Josh. 10:42). Chapter 11 records another defeat of a massive Canaanite army, this one assembled of kings from the north. The Canaanite kings and people were devastated by Israel and her God.

When the conquest was complete, “Joshua took the whole land...and Joshua gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their divisions by their tribes” (Josh. 11:23). The conquest of the land was just the first part of Israel being given the land; the next part was the actual distribution of the land among the tribes (Josh. 14–19). While reading about such divisions and land boundaries may not seem exciting, the reader must imagine how precious the inheritance would have been to each tribe. Each tribe was receiving its own part of the land that God had promised to Abraham. The riches of the inheritance speak volumes about the greatness and kindness of the God who gave the inheritance. As the modern reader thinks about these boundaries, he should rejoice in God, who had the power and desire to be so good to His people Israel.

### Challenge in the Promised Land: Joshua 13:1–6

After all the land had been divided, Joshua 21:43–45 summarizes the Lord’s faithfulness: “So the LORD gave to Israel all the land of which He had sworn to give to

their fathers, and they took possession of it and dwelt in it....Not a word failed of any good thing which the Lord had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass." Other passages such as 10:40–42, 11:16–23, and 23:1 also portray Israel as having received the fulfillment of God's promises. Although the book of Joshua pictures Israel as having received God's promises, it also pictures Israel as not having fully taken the land. In Joshua 13:1, the Lord said, "There remains very much land yet to be possessed." The Lord proceeded to list areas of land and various inhabitants over which He promised to give Israel victory (13:2–6). Joshua 14:12; 15:63; 16:10; 17:12–13; 18:2–3; and 19:47 all refer to people or areas which remained unconquered. The presence of the Canaanite nations must not be looked at solely as a result of Israel's failure to obey God. God had declared that He would drive out the people little by little, giving Israel time to multiply and fill the land (Ex. 23:29–30; Deut. 7:22). But God had promised Israel victory in battle. Israel's inability to drive out the Canaanites in Joshua 15:63; 16:10; 17:12–13 and Judges 1:27–36 suggests that Israel had become unfaithful in their worship of the true God (Josh. 23:13).

The presence of the Canaanites among the Israelites would present a massive challenge to Israel. Would Israel be faithful and follow God's law while they were still sharing the Promised Land with those Canaanites who had not yet been removed? Would they embrace the fact that God had given them the land, or would they forget and follow the gods of Canaan?

### **Caution to Be Faithful in the Promised Land: Joshua 23**

Joshua was well aware of the challenge faced by the Israelites. When he was almost 110 years old (Josh. 23:1, 24:29), he warned the people of the danger of living among the Canaanites (Josh. 23). Joshua 23 can be divided into three sections: verses 3–8, 9–13, and 14–16. In each section, Joshua first reminded the people of what God had done for them. God fought for the people (23:3), promised to drive out the rest of the inhabitants of the Promised Land (23:5), drove out the nations (23:9), made Israel unbeatable (23:9–10), and kept all His promises (23:14).

In the first section, after repeating the good God had done, Joshua exhorted the people to "be very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses" (Josh. 23:6). But because Israel was still living among the Canaanites, Joshua instructed the Israelites not to "make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause anyone to swear by them; you shall not serve them nor bow down to them" (23:7). Joshua knew Israel needed special exhortations to purity because they were surrounded by idolaters.

In the second section, Joshua again followed a report of God's goodness with instructions: "Take careful heed to yourselves, that you love the LORD your God" (Josh. 23:11). But this time, the instruction was coupled with a warning. If Israel did not love God and instead adhered to the Canaanite remnants and married them (23:12), God would not drive out the Canaanites (23:13). If Israel chose the wickedness of the Canaanites, God would allow the Canaanites to be "snares and traps" to the Israelites, "scourges on your sides and thorns in your eyes" (23:13). Israel's punishment would be that the Canaanites would so corrupt them that eventually they would lose the land.

In the third section, Joshua did not give an instruction after repeating the Lord's goodness; he only gave a warning. Joshua promised that just as God had been faithful to keep His promises of blessing, He would keep His promises of cursing (23:15). Joshua promised the people, "When you have transgressed the covenant of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, and have gone and served

other gods, and bowed down to them, then the anger of the Lord will burn against you, and you shall perish quickly from the good land which He has given you" (v. 16). How Israel responded to the challenge of the Canaanites would determine whether they enjoyed God's promised blessings.

### **Charge to Serve God in the Promised Land: Joshua 24:14–15**

In Joshua's second farewell address (Josh. 24), he again reminded the Israelites of God's grace (24:1–13). In verse 14, he commanded the people, "Fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the LORD!" Joshua knew that the people had to choose whether they were going to serve God or the gods of the Canaanites. In verse 15, Joshua told the people, "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve...but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." Joshua was committed that his family would follow the Lord, regardless of what the rest of Israel did. For a time, Israel was committed to following God (24:16–18, 21, 24). They faithfully follow the Lord during the days of Joshua (24:31). But eventually, Israel's resistance to the Canaanite sin deteriorated as they forgot to cling to God's Law and instead worshiped the Canaanites gods. Israel's falling away from the Lord is a special warning for all saints to be wholeheartedly devoted to the Lord while they continue to live in a sinful, idolatrous world.

## **POINT TO THE TRUTH**

*"Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth" (Psalm 78:1).*

This section includes questions to review last week's lesson and ideas to prepare students for this week's lesson. Choose from the following ideas to point to the truths of this lesson.



### **Review Questions**

*Use these questions to review and reinforce key truths.*

Did any of the Israelites take from Jericho things that were not allowed?  
*Yes. Achan took things that he was not allowed to take.*

What did Achan take?

*Achan took a beautiful piece of clothing, some silver, and some gold. The clothing was supposed to have been destroyed, and the silver and the gold were supposed to have been put in the treasury of the house of the Lord.*

Since Achan was disobedient and took things he was not allowed, what happened to the Israelites?

*God became very angry, and the Israelites were defeated by Ai.*

What happened so that God was no longer angry with the Israelites?

*Joshua and the Israelites obeyed God and killed Achan because he had done a terrible thing. Achan had taken the things that were just for God. God had told the Israelites not to do that or they would be accursed.*

When we are disobedient and sin against God, what should we do so that God will be pleased with us?

*We should ask God for forgiveness. God knows that we are not perfect. He knows that we are disobedient sometimes. But when we find out that we have sinned, we must pray to God for forgiveness. And when we ask for forgiveness, we are being obedient. Sin is disobedience against God.*



### Magnet Center

Bring magnets of various sizes and shapes to class. Also bring various items that are affected by magnets (screws, nails, paper clips, etc.) and various items that are not affected by magnets (buttons, beans, plastic toys, blocks, etc.). Demonstrate that the magnets attract some items and not others. In today's Bible lesson, Joshua told the Israelites to serve the Lord God and to obey Him. We are to stay close to God, just as some of the objects wanted to stay close to the magnets. (For younger students, use larger items so that they can handle the articles during the discussion.)



### The Cling Test

Bring in a ten-pound sack of rice or some other item of similar weight that would be difficult, but not impossible, for the students to pick up. Ask for several volunteers, or choose students from the class. Tell the students that they cannot "cling" to the sack of rice but must hold it out in front of them at all times. Instruct each student to pick up the sack and hold it in front of him. Time each student to see how long he can hold the object in that position. Then have the students try again, but this time, they can "cling" to the object with both arms and hold it tightly to their bodies. Time each student to see how long he can hold it now. It should be considerably longer than the first time. Ask the class what it means to "cling" to something. In today's Bible lesson, Joshua told the people to "cling to the Lord." When we cling to the Lord, our burdens become easier to handle, just like the object was easier to handle when we clung to it. God wants us to "cling" to Him by trusting in His Word.



### Walk the Straight Path

Use a balance beam, wooden board, or wide tape line on the floor to teach the students about walking the straight path. Instruct the students to walk carefully along the line without falling. It may be necessary to steady the younger students by walking along next to them. Joshua told the Israelites, "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Josh. 24:15). God would help His people to obey by being with them wherever they walked the path that He had instructed.



### Conquer-and-Divide Snack

The conquest of the land was complete. Israel conquered the land, and then Joshua divided it among the people as their inheritance. Illustrate this with a snack. Instruct the students to carry over the snack and bring it to you. Divide and distribute the snack among the class.



### Taking Possession of the Promised Land

Materials: string, index cards numbered 1–12

Directions: Use this activity to provide background for students to understand Israel's conquest and division of the Promised Land. Before class, use string to divide the classroom into 12 sections of various sizes. Do not number the areas so

that the land inheritance will be a surprise. Give each student a numbered index card. At the beginning of the lesson, call forward each of the 12 tribes of Israel, and tell them which part of the Promised Land they inherit. Direct the students with the number 1 on their cards to stand up and move to their area. Continue in this manner until all the tribes have inherited a piece of the Promised Land. With all students standing in their designated areas, read Joshua 21:43–45 to the class. Instruct the students to take their seats for the remainder of the lesson.

## PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

*“Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done” (Psalm 78:4).*

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included that you can use to proclaim your worship to God. Use the lesson questions to check the students’ understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use during the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done directly from the Bible.

### Bible Lesson

Today, we are going to learn about the end of Joshua’s life. Joshua had been a faithful leader for Israel, but now he was getting very old, over 100 years old. He had some things to share with Israel before he died. Joshua remembered all the wonderful things that God had done for Israel through his years of leadership—being encouraged to be a faithful leader like Moses; the marching around and destruction of Jericho; Rahab, the faithful woman who provided for the spies; the many great battles that had been fought; even the defeat at Ai). God had forgiven Israel when they repented, and they had known God’s great blessing again as they took the land from the Canaanites. Joshua had many great and good memories of how God had provided for Israel.

Joshua gathered all the people together and reminded them of all God had done for them and how He had fought for them. God had been faithful to care for all of Israel, and now, they could be sure that their great, unchanging God was going to continue to care for them. Joshua told the people, “Therefore be very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, lest you turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left” (Josh. 23:6).

Joshua knew that the people must follow God’s law and be faithful to Him in order to continue to receive His blessings. Joshua warned the people not to marry the Canaanites or to take the gods of the Canaanites or, but to be pure before their righteous and holy God. “When you have transgressed the covenant of the LORD your God, which He commanded you, and have gone and served other gods, and bowed down to them, then the anger of the LORD will burn against you, and you shall perish quickly from off the good land which He has given you” (Josh. 23:16). Joshua knew that it was very important for Israel to be faithful to their God, and he wanted to be sure they understood that there would be serious consequences if they disobeyed God. God meant what He said. Obedience is very important to God, both for Israel and for us.

Israel was given the land that had been promised to them. The land was divided among all the tribes and shared so that every family had some land to use. What

a wonderful blessing that God had it all planned out and everyone had their needs met. What a great God we serve. Everyone had a place to call home.

Home is very important to all of us, just as it was to Israel. It is important that our homes honor God and be true to His Word. Joshua made this statement about his family: "But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Josh. 24:15b). Other people might choose not to follow God, but Joshua made it clear about his family's stance. What about you? Will you choose like Joshua to stand for God and be true to His Word? That is what God asks us to do even today.

Joshua asked the people to make a commitment to do what was right. The people answered Joshua: "The LORD our God we will serve and His voice we will obey!" (Josh. 24:24). Joshua made a covenant with the people and wrote in the book of the law of God. He then put a large stone under a big oak tree as a reminder to all Israel of their promise to God. After this took place, Joshua dismissed all the people to go to their homes and the land that they had inherited.

The Bible tells us, "Now it came to pass after these things that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being one hundred and ten years old. And they buried him within the border of his inheritance" (Josh. 24:29–30). Joshua, the faithful servant of the Most High God, had died and was buried on his inherited land. "Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had known all the works of the LORD which He had done for Israel" (Josh. 24:31).

We see in today's story that obedience is the most important thing. God will bless those who are obedient to Him. Joshua knew that, and he tried to teach that to Israel. Today, I pray that each of you will have a willing heart to be obedient to what God wants you to do.



## Lesson Questions

Did God keep His promise to give Israel land?

*Yes. Just as God had promised long before, He gave the land to the children of Israel.*

Did the nation of Israel win the battles against the other nations because they were strong?

*No. They won the battles and conquered the land because "the LORD God of Israel fought for Israel" (Josh. 10:42).*

Once the land was conquered, what did Joshua do?

*He divided the land and gave it to the people, and the people lived in it.*

What problem did the people face while living in the land?

*There were still Canaanites in the land, and they worshiped their own gods.*

What was the problem with the Israelites and Canaanites living together?

*Joshua knew the tendency of the people to wander away from God and follow other gods.*

What did Joshua say to the people?

*Joshua reminded them of all the good things that God had done for them. He warned the people that if they did not remove the Canaanites from the land, Israel would eventually be removed from the land themselves. They were told to serve only God.*





## Presentation Ideas

### A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards

Use appropriate A Beka Book Flash-A-Cards with the lesson.



### Betty Lukens Flannelgraph

Use appropriate flannelgraph pieces with the lesson.

## Praise and Worship

*Great Is Thy Faithfulness*

*Oh, Be Careful*

*The Wise Man and Foolish Man*

*Trust and Obey*



### A Reminder

Joshua's work was done and it was time to say farewell,  
*(Lay head on folded hands; then wave.)*

He gave some good reminders to the sons of Israel.  
*(Point to temple.)*

"Remember that the Lord is God, and He has fought for you."  
*(Point up; make a fist.)*

Remember, always give to Him the glory He is due.  
*(Point to temple; lift up head, eyes, and hands.)*

Don't fear to take the Promised Land, be brave in Yahweh's name.  
*(Shake head; flex biceps.)*

Remember not to stray from Him, for this will bring you shame."  
*(Point to temple; then clasp hands and lower head shamefully.)*

## PRACTICE THE TRUTH

*"That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments" (Psalm 78:7).*

Choose ideas from this section to review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.



### House Door Hanger

Materials: copies of the "Door Hanger" craft page, crayons, scissors

Directions: Have each student cut out the door hanger. Then he can draw a picture of his house and family on the front.



### The Gift

Materials: gift materials, tape, scissors

Directions: Give the students the materials needed to create a gift box or bag. With the gift materials the student can make a gift bag or box to hold their puzzle pieces or other craft. Last, the student can glue on the reminder that God promised to give Israel the land and He kept His promise.



### Israel Puzzle

Materials Needed: copies of "Twelve Tribes of Israel" puzzle, scissors, crayons, glue

Directions: Before class, cut out a puzzle for each student. During class, have the students color the pieces and then glue them to a separate sheet of paper.

**Variation:** For very young students, the puzzle may be too difficult. Instead of cutting out the parts, have the students color in the various inheritances in different colors. The students can then draw stick people (or place stickers) in each region to remind them that each was an inheritance of the people of Israel.



### Complete the Picture

Give each student a copy of the "Be Faithful to Complete the Task" page. He can finish the picture and then color it in.



### What's the Difference?

Talk about how God instructed Israel to look different and be different. Today, Christians basically look the same as everyone else. Yet we are called to be different, too. Draw or tape two identical child images to a dry-erase board. How can we tell which one is a Christian? What does a Christian do that others do not? Christians do all things because they love God. Place a red heart sticker on one child to make him different. Talk about ways we can be different from the heart.

### Coloring Sheets

Give each student a copy of the coloring sheets at the back of the lesson. The students can color the pages in class or at home.

### Coloring Page Extra

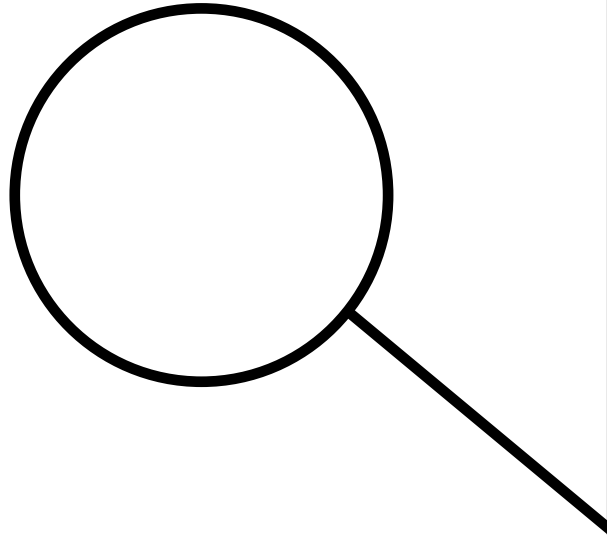
Read Joshua 24:15 to the students. Explain that both Joshua and his family (house) would serve the Lord. Ask the students to draw what they think Joshua and with his family and house may have looked like on the back of the second coloring page.



### MEMORY VERSE

"Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15).

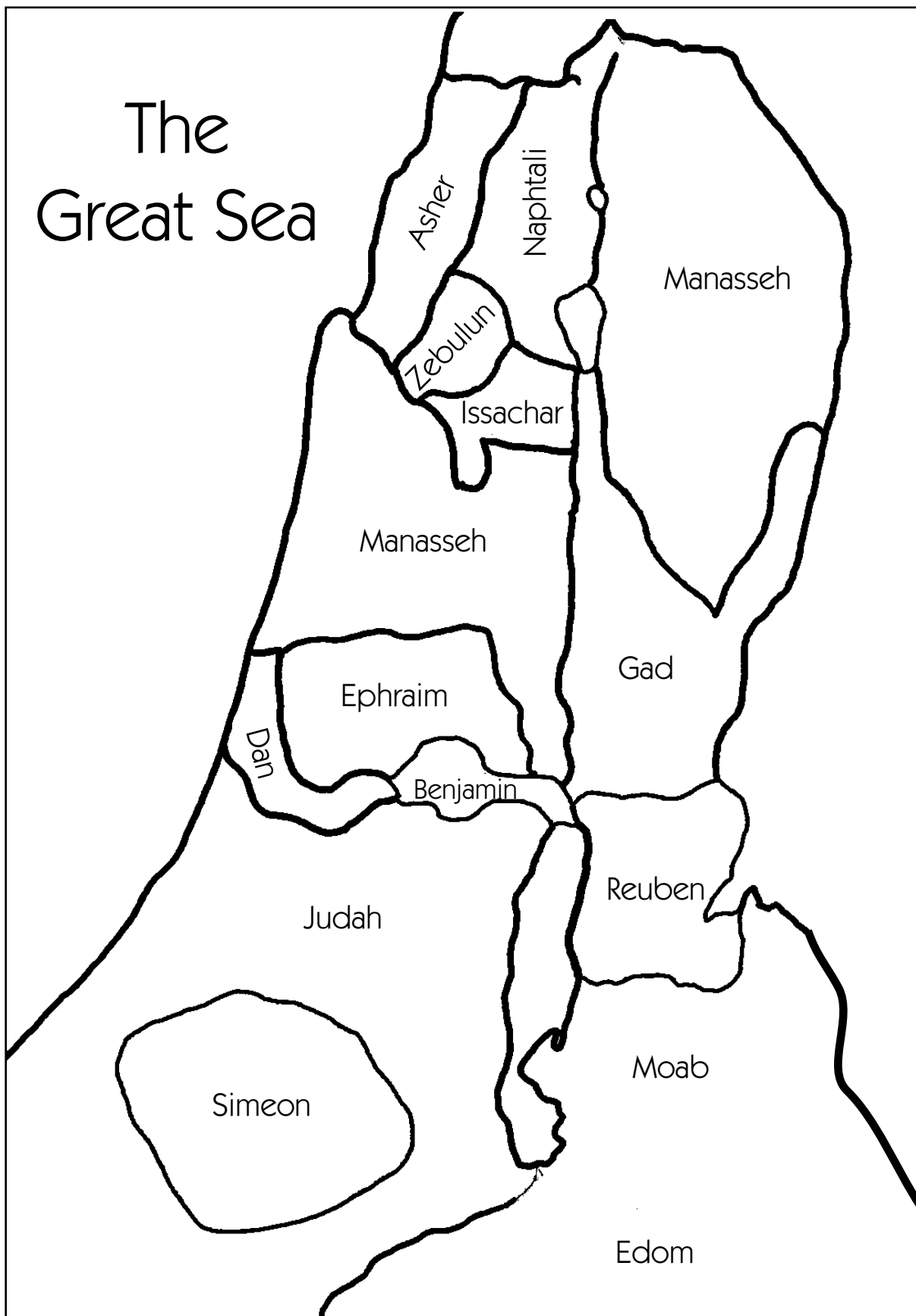
# Door Hanger



“But as for me and my house,  
we will serve the LORD”  
(Joshua 24:15b).



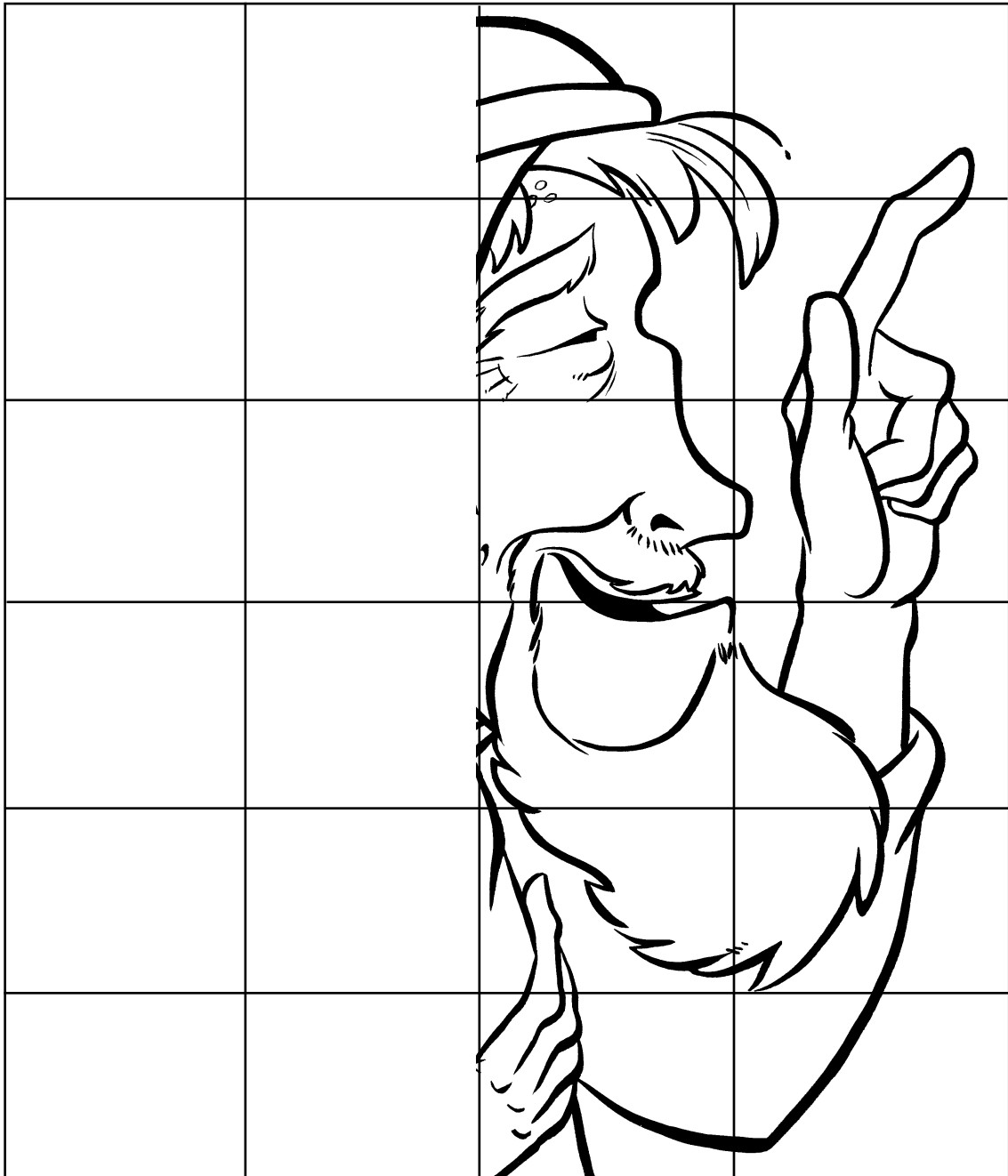
# Twelve Tribes Puzzle







# Be Faithful to Complete the Task



“But take careful heed to do the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways, to keep His commandments, to hold fast to Him, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul” (Joshua 22:5).











**"See, I have divided to you by lot these nations that remain, to be an inheritance for your tribes" (Joshua 23:4).**





**“And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Joshua 24:15).**

