prayer requests

study notes

eastview
christian church

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1500 North Airport Road
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Sermon Study

War Stories - Counting Victories
Joshua 12

vision

Eastview Christian Church is a fearless church of Christ followers whose ridiculous love and dangerous witness are irresistible.

AUTHOR'S NOTES (summary of key points for this study)

Chapter 11 of Joshua ends, "Then the land had rest from war." We know that the Israelites did not completely rid the Promised Land of their enemies, yet chapter 12 allows them to see their incredible string of victories. Though this chapter can be viewed as "just a list," it is far more than that. It is a shining reminder of the victories God's people achieve individually and corporately in His providence. It is a call to give thanks in everything.

Gather (your group getting to know each other)

What was your own "personal best" winning streak? As a part of a sports team? Hitting the green lights on Veterans'? Getting to church on time? Share with your group a memory of a winning streak.

Go
(your group on mission)

As believers, we are able to see God's faithfulness, blessings, and victories in our lives. Share Christ's encouragement this week with someone who would not be quick to see God's hand in her/her life. Identify a blessing in his/her life and call it by that name.

Grow (your group growing as Christ-followers)

Key Scripture:
Joshua 12:24b/look at the last four words of this chapter: "in all, Thirty-one kings." Incredibly, this number references the Israelite's winning streak in defeating kings and kingdoms the promised land. This is not a basketball tournament, or a long string of "up" days in the stock market. This is life and death stuff…military victory after military victory, over years of battle. Has there ever been another streak like it in the history of mankind? Is there any way to see this except as a miracle granted by the hand of God?

Discussion:
1. Have someone open with prayer.

2. Rather than read this chapter aloud, note this: verse 1a mentions "their land…toward the sunrise" (east of the Jordan) and verse 7 states that the further victories listed in this chapter happened on the west side of the Jordan. No one leader could claim all of these victories. It took Moses and Joshua to rack up this many victories!

What victory have you had that wouldn't have been possible without someone else? (And share how God provided that person in that situation.)

3. As a believer, you've had dozens of victories in your life, thanks to the Lord! So could you list your top 31? Your top 10?

Share one victory, old or new. ((See I Corinthians 15:54-57, Psalm 149:4, I John 5:4 and hum a verse of "Victory in Jesus" to yourself on the way home.)

4. Although we read this as a list, these are descriptions of real victories and real places the Israelites claimed. The boundaries of these kingdoms became the boundaries of the land of each tribe.

Do you tend to skip over lists like this in the Bible? Why or why not?

Where else in the Bible are there lists that give us important information?

(Don't read every word, but run your eyes over Matthew 1:1-17, Genesis 4:17-22, 11:10-26, Ezra 7:1-5) These lists trace lineage through multiple generations; anthropologists call this structural depth, and this kind of depth buttresses the reliability of the Bible.

5. Such a list would have reminded the Israelites to be thankful. Our faith grows as we remember all that God has done. He has been faithful in the past and will be in the future. (See Psalm 33:4, 36:5, 86:15, 100:5, Lamentations 3:22-23, 1 Corinthians 1:9, 1 Thessalonians 5:24, 2 Timothy 2:13, Hebrews 10:23)

Tell of a time in the past when you felt overwhelming gratitude, but recently have nearly let slip from your memory. Share God's faithfulness with your group.

6. Read Joshua 12:7b.

Why is the land referred to consistently as an "inheritance" of the tribes of Israel in the law and in Joshua? (This word is used over 40 (!) times in Joshua. See also Joshua 11:23, and Genesis 12:7.) God keeps His promises!

7. Read Psalm 136 with one person reading the varied lines, and the rest of the group repeating the refrain: "His love endures forever." Appreciate the celebration of this inheritance in its larger context.

How does the focus of this whole psalm lift our eyes and our perspective?

8. As chapter 12 closes, we know that many of the tribes had to continue to fight to hold onto the land God had given them. This chapter is that "halfway point" between where Israel has been and where she is going in the future.

As the people of God now, how do we experience the tension between the war that Christ has won for us, and the battles we still have to fight?

Name some battles that are ongoing and talk about how we should respond.

Give
(your group serving each other)

Think back over the last few years of your life. Take time to say and/or write a prayer of thanksgiving remembering God's work, less in the form of a "thank you for blessing me" and more in the detailed manner of Joshua 12. Share some of these at your next gathering or in a common e-mail. You will enrich each other by doing so.