

Talk It Over 45: Bible Study Edition

Teaching Series: *The Story*
Message: The Battle Begins (*Chapter 7*) – Kirsten Kroeker
Passages: Joshua 1-2, 6, 8, 10-11, 23-24
Date: November 3 and 4, 2017

How to use Talk It Over

This version of Talk It Over is designed for groups whose primary focus is studying the Word of God. There is lots of depth in information and questions about the principle passage of the weekend message. This study is designed to be done in 30 to 60 minutes. To take full advantage of the TiO created for our exploration of *The Story* it is recommended that you do the following (in this order): 1) Read the associated chapter in *The Story*; 2) Watch the sermon for the chapter; 3) Gather as a small group and talk together using this document as your guide. Because each chapter in *The Story* contains only pieces of the books of the Bible, please check out page 494-495 to see what parts of the Bible are actually being referenced.

The Main Idea

Now that Moses is dead the leadership of the people of Israel falls to Joshua. You'll remember that he was one of the spies (along with Caleb) who was confident that the people of Canaan would fall in the face of God. The story of Joshua is one of obedience and a renewal of the idea that God is a holy God and that the land needed to be prepared for his people to live in it. There are, frankly, some hard and bloody incidents in Joshua but through it all the supremacy of God over all the nations and the need for the people of God to be pure comes through clearly.

Warm Up Questions: (Choose 1 or 2)

Q1: Finish this sentence: "War, what is it good for?"

Q2: Do you come from a pacifist tradition? How were you taught (school, home, church) to view violence?

Q3: In thinking about Kirsten's sermon, what questions or insights about this part of *The Story* did you come away with?

Dig a Little Deeper

The people of Israel enter the promised land. But, between them and “happily ever after” stand the people who inhabit their fortified cities.

Act 1: The Taking of Jericho (pp. 89-93)

“Then the LORD said to Joshua, ‘See, I have delivered Jericho into your hands, along with its king and its fighting men.’”

Having forded the Jordan river the people of Israel found themselves at the barred gates of the city of Jericho. However, beforehand they had secured the collusion of Rahab, an inhabitant of the city, and they had been able to get advanced information about it. Strangely, God did not ask the people to attack immediately but, instead, had them march around the walls before, finally, God’s hand moved, the walls fell down, and the victory was secured. Everything in the city was killed or destroyed except for Rahab, whose family was preserved and who became a descendant of Joseph, the father of Jesus.

Act 2: The Ups and Downs of Ai (pp. 94-95)

“Twelve thousand men and women fell that day—all the people of Ai.”

For the most part the armies of Israel enjoyed success as they moved across the land of Canaan. Ai was a notable exception, and this because of the disobedience of one man, Achan. However, once this was taken care of the defeat of Ai could be executed.

Act 3: Five Kings and the Defense of Gibeon (pp. 96-98)

“So Joshua marched up from Gilgal with his entire army, including all the best fighting men. The LORD said to Joshua, ‘Do not be afraid of them; I have given them into your hand. Not one of them will be able to withstand you.’”

As a leader, Joshua seemed consistently wise and attentive to God. With one exception, he made a treaty with Gibeon, one of the nations in Canaan. Having done this, Israel was compelled to come to the aid of Gibeon when a coalition of 5 kings attacked Gibeon, partly as a ploy to draw Israel into someone else’s war and weaken them. However, once again, God was with the armies of Israel and they prevailed and the 5 kings were killed and their land taken.

Act 4: Enemies Rise and Fall (pp. 98-99)

“The LORD said to Joshua, ‘Do not be afraid of them, because by this time tomorrow I will hand all of them, slain, over to Israel.’”

As the victories of Israel over the nations in Canaan mounted the remaining kings became more nervous. But none of the alliances that were formed were ever a match for God and his people. And so, finally, the land was completely conquered.

Act 5: The Death of Joshua (pp. 99-102)

“So Joshua took the entire land, just as the LORD had directed Moses, and he gave it as an inheritance to Israel according to their tribal divisions. Then the land had rest from war.”

Once the land had been conquered Joshua’s task was complete. And the land had rest from war and finally Joshua died. But before his death Joshua reminded the people of the faithfulness of God and their need to continue to be faithful to him. And he declared what he desired for the whole of the people, “But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”

Looking back at the story, there are two themes: the holiness of God and the two-sided relationship between God and his people. Of note is also the recurring theme of “strong and courageous” and the complete lack of complaining that comes with obeying God and victory over their enemies.

1) The Holiness of God

The holiness of God is not a new theme. We’ve encountered it specifically as the people approached Mount Sinai and we have seen what happened to the people when they violated God’s holiness. After all of the explaining of the violence and war and the need to rid the land of the people who lived there, we encounter the need for the people of God to clear the evil from the land before they can settle there. And this is because a holy God needs a holy people and makes his people holy. This realization that God is holy (set apart) and that his people are also to be holy (set apart) is one of the reasons that the land and cities needed to be cleared before the people of Israel could live there. This does not make us feel better about all of the carnage and death but it is a reason for it.

Q1: What examples are there in this chapter of the consequences of not recognizing the holiness of God or his command that his people be holy (set apart)?

Q2: What do you think of the idea that the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament are radically different?

2) The two-sided relationship between God and the people of Israel

The covenant that God made with Abraham and the promises that God has made since that promise were never one-sided. God had conditions to his blessing. The people were to serve him and be obedient. This chapter shows how well things could go if the people listened to God and did what he asked.

Q3: What conditions are placed onto the people in terms of their side of the blessing of God, that is, in order for God to bless them, what did they need to do? Can you give examples from chapter 6?

Q4: Are the blessings of God and his grace the same thing? Give examples from the chapter.

Next Steps

War and the bloody nature of ancient near-Eastern society is a stumbling block for some people as they consider the Old Testament as a description of God and his relationship with people. It is clear from chapter 6 in *The Story* that sometimes God comes with a sword and that sword is wielded by his people. As followers of Jesus we acknowledge the Old Testament and the New Testament in combination as the written revelation of God's relationship with human beings. So, we cannot avoid talking about these things.

Q1: It has often been said that many Christians have Sunday School ideas of the stories of the Bible, that is, we read a story in a children's Bible and from that point forward we understand the details of that story as the sum-total of the facts. Are there stories from your childhood (or adulthood) that you see differently now that you are looking at them more closely?

Q2: Have you ever been asked by someone who is not a Christian to justify the God of the Old Testament? What did you say?

Q3: "Be strong and courageous." How does that apply to your life, right now?

Q4: Did you take on the challenge to not complain last week? How did that go for you?

Share with each other about your need to be strong and courageous in the week to come. The pray for each other.