

The Book of Joshua, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 8: The Sun Stands Still: Victory in the South

Joshua 10:1-43

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

The doctrinal center of this lesson is the sovereign power of God, who fights for His people and keeps His promises, displayed in the most dramatic terms Scripture offers. Help the class lift their eyes from the battlefield to the One above it. Five times the chapter insists that the Lord is the true victor: He delivers the enemy, He casts down hailstones, He hearkens to Joshua's voice, He fights for Israel. The miracle of the long day is not finally a puzzle to be solved but a glory to be worshiped, the God who made the heavens holding the sun in place because He chose to fight for His own. Lead your students to see that the same God still keeps His word and still goes before His people.

Handle the conquest with great care, for the class will rightly feel its weight. Teach it as God's unique and unrepeatable act of covenant judgment, His justice falling at last on nations whose wickedness had ripened over centuries (Genesis 15:16), executed by His direct command at one precise moment in redemptive history. Be clear that this is in no way a warrant for human violence, vengeance, or holy war in our day. Hold God's justice and His patient grace together, and point the class to the truth that the Christian's warfare is now wholly spiritual, fought with the armor of God against the powers of darkness, never with the sword against flesh and blood (2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Ephesians 6:10-18).

This lesson is aimed at the fearful and the weary in your class, those facing battles that loom larger than their strength. To them the chapter speaks the very word God spoke to Joshua: 'Fear not: for I have delivered them into thine hand.' Press them to trade self-reliance for living dependence, to pray boldly as Joshua did, and to work hard while trusting wholly, for Israel marched and swung swords even as the Lord fought for them. And lift their gaze to the God who commands the sun, that they may rest their fears on a Lord who is mighty to save and faithful to keep every promise He has made to His people in Christ.

Question 1

Student Question:

When Adonizedek hears that Gibeon has made peace with Israel, five Amorite kings unite to attack the city, and Gibeon sends a desperate plea to Joshua: 'come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us' (Joshua 10:1-6). Joshua had been deceived by these very people, yet he marches all night to rescue them. What does Joshua's faithfulness to his oath, even toward those who tricked him, reveal about the seriousness of a word sworn before God?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The chapter opens with fear spreading among the kings of Canaan. Adonizedek of Jerusalem hears 'how Joshua had taken Ai, and had utterly destroyed it,' and how 'the inhabitants of Gibeon had made peace with Israel' (Joshua 10:1). The defection of so great a city alarms him, 'because Gibeon was a great city... and all the men thereof were mighty' (Joshua 10:2).

So Adonizedek gathers four other Amorite kings, and the five march up, not first against Israel, but against Gibeon, to punish the city that sought peace (Joshua 10:3-5). The Gibeonites, having forsaken their old alliances, now stand alone against their former neighbors, and they send a frantic plea to Joshua: 'Slack not thy hand from thy servants; come up to us quickly, and save us, and help us' (Joshua 10:6).

Here is the test of Joshua's word. These are the very people who deceived him, who dressed in rags and carried moldy bread to trick him into a treaty. He owed them nothing but his oath. Yet 'Joshua ascended from Gilgal, he, and all the people of war with him' (Joshua 10:7), marching all night up the long road to Gibeon to rescue those who had fooled him.

This is the seriousness of a vow sworn before God lived out in action. Joshua did not weigh whether the Gibeonites deserved his help; he weighed that he had given his word in the name of the Lord. A promise made before God is kept even when the other party was false, even when keeping it costs an all-night march into danger.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The kings of Canaan feared Israel and united against Gibeon for making peace (Joshua 10:1-5).
- Joshua kept his oath to the Gibeonites even though they had deceived him (Joshua 9:15; 10:6-7).
- A vow sworn in the name of the Lord is binding even toward those who wronged us.
- Keeping our word may cost us greatly; Joshua marched all night to rescue those who had tricked him.

Discussion Prompts

- Why did the five Amorite kings attack Gibeon rather than Israel directly?
- What did it cost Joshua to keep his oath to the Gibeonites?
- What does Joshua's faithfulness teach us about the weight of a word sworn before God?

Question 2

Student Question:

Before the battle, the Lord tells Joshua, 'Fear not: for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee' (Joshua 10:8). Where in your own life are you most

tempted to fear an enemy or obstacle that looms large in front of you? What would change if you truly believed God had already gone before you?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Before a sword is drawn, the Lord speaks: 'Fear not: for I have delivered them into thine hand; there shall not a man of them stand before thee' (Joshua 10:8). Notice the tense. God does not say He will deliver them; He says He has already delivered them. The victory is settled before the battle begins.

This is a self-examination question. The enemies that loom largest in our lives, the diagnosis, the debt, the broken relationship, the fear we cannot shake, often feel overwhelming precisely because we face them as if their outcome were still in doubt. But to the believer, God speaks the same kind of word: He has already gone before us.

Press the class to name the obstacle that looms large in front of them right now. What feels too big? What keeps them awake? Then set God's word against it: 'Fear not... I have delivered them into thine hand.' The size of the enemy is not measured against our strength but against the Lord who goes before.

Help students see that faith does not pretend the enemy is small. The five kings were real, their armies were real, the danger was real. Faith simply refuses to face the real enemy alone, because the God who says 'fear not' has already gone ahead. Courage is not the absence of a real threat; it is the presence of a faithful God.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God told Joshua the victory was already won before the battle began (Joshua 10:8).
- Our greatest fears loom large when we face them as though the outcome were still uncertain.
- Faith does not deny the danger; it refuses to face the danger without God.
- The believer can hear the same word God spoke to Joshua: He has already gone before us (Deuteronomy 31:8).

Discussion Prompts

- What enemy or obstacle looms largest in front of you right now?
- How would it change you to truly believe God has already gone before you?
- What is the difference between denying a danger and refusing to face it alone?

Question 3

Student Question:

As the Amorites flee, 'the Lord cast down great stones from heaven upon them... and they were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword'

(Joshua 10:11). Why is it important that the text gives more credit for the victory to the hailstones from heaven than to Israel's swords, and what does this teach about who truly wins God's battles?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

As the Amorites flee down the descent of Bethhoron, the Lord Himself enters the battle: 'the Lord cast down great stones from heaven upon them unto Azekah, and they died' (Joshua 10:11). This is no ordinary storm; it falls precisely on the fleeing enemy and spares Israel.

The text is careful to give heaven the greater credit: 'they were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword' (Joshua 10:11). Israel fought, but the decisive blow came from above. The real victor in this battle is the Lord of heaven, not the army of Israel.

This guards us against a deadly pride. It would have been easy for Israel to boast in its swords, its strategy, its all-night march. The text will not let them, and will not let us. 'The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the Lord' (Proverbs 21:31). We labor, but the victory belongs to God.

Help the class apply this to the battles God wins through them. When a marriage is healed, a habit broken, a soul brought to Christ, the temptation is to credit our effort, our method, our willpower. The hailstones from heaven remind us that the decisive power is always God's. We swing the sword; He wins the war.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The Lord cast down hailstones from heaven that killed more than Israel's swords (Joshua 10:11).
- Scripture deliberately gives God the greater credit for the victory, guarding against human pride.
- We labor in God's battles, but the decisive power is always His (Proverbs 21:31).
- When God wins a victory through us, the glory belongs to Him, not to our effort or method.

Discussion Prompts

- Why does the text emphasize the hailstones over Israel's swords?
- What does this teach us about who truly wins God's battles?
- Where are you tempted to credit your own effort for a victory that was really God's?

Question 4

Student Question:

Joshua prayed out loud, in front of the whole army, before he commanded the sun and moon (Joshua 10:12). When you face a daunting moment, are you more likely to pray boldly and

publicly trusting God, or to quietly strategize on your own? What holds you back from bold, expectant prayer?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Before the great miracle, Joshua does something remarkable: 'Then spake Joshua to the Lord... and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon' (Joshua 10:12). He prays out loud, in front of the whole army, and only then commands the sun. The boldness of the prayer is itself part of the wonder.

This is a self-examination question. Joshua's instinct in the heat of battle was to turn to God openly and expectantly. Many of us, by contrast, treat prayer as a private last resort, something we do quietly after we have exhausted our own strategies, and only if there is time.

Ask the class honestly: when a daunting moment comes, are they more likely to pray boldly, trusting God to act, or to slip into anxious problem-solving on their own? What holds them back from the kind of expectant, public dependence Joshua shows here?

Help students see that Joshua's bold prayer flowed from a settled confidence in the God he had walked with for decades. Bold prayer is not presumption; it is the natural language of a heart that truly knows and trusts the Lord. The timid prayer often betrays a small view of God; the bold prayer rests on a great one.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Joshua prayed openly and boldly before the whole army, then commanded the sun (Joshua 10:12).
- We often treat prayer as a private last resort instead of a first, expectant act of faith.
- Bold prayer flows from a settled confidence in the God we know and trust.
- Timid prayer can betray a small view of God; expectant prayer rests on a great one (Hebrews 4:16).

Discussion Prompts

- Are you more likely to pray boldly or to quietly strategize on your own?
- What holds you back from bold, expectant, public prayer?
- How does knowing God closely change the way we pray?

Question 5

Student Question:

At Joshua's word, 'the sun stood still, and the moon stayed... So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day' (Joshua 10:13). Sincere believers have discussed exactly how this happened, but the text keeps the emphasis elsewhere. How does this

miracle display God's absolute power over the creation He made, and why should that truth strengthen our faith rather than trouble it?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

At Joshua's word the impossible happens: 'the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies... So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day' (Joshua 10:13). The God who set the sun in the sky holds it where He pleases.

Sincere believers have discussed exactly how this took place, and we may humbly acknowledge that the precise mechanics are not spelled out for us. But the text does not invite us into that debate; it keeps the emphasis squarely on the power and faithfulness of God. The God who made the heavens can certainly do this. That is the point.

Let the wonder rest where Scripture rests it. The same God who flung the stars into being, who calls them all by name and not one fails to answer (Isaiah 40:26), is more than able to still the sun for an afternoon. To stumble over the mechanics is to forget how great the Maker is. The miracle troubles only those who have made their God too small.

Help the class see that this is meant to strengthen faith, not strain it. If God rules the sun, He surely rules our circumstances. If the heavens obey His voice through the prayer of a man, then no situation in our lives is beyond His reach. The God of the long day is the God who hears us still.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- At Joshua's word the sun stood still about a whole day (Joshua 10:13).
- Believers have discussed the mechanics, but the text keeps the emphasis on God's power, not the method.
- The God who made and named the heavens can certainly hold the sun in place (Isaiah 40:26).
- The miracle is meant to strengthen faith; if God rules the sun, He rules our circumstances.

Discussion Prompts

- How does this miracle display God's power over the creation He made?
- Why should this strengthen our faith rather than trouble it?
- What does it say about us if we find God's power over creation hard to believe?

Question 6

Student Question:

The text says this was a day when 'the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man' (Joshua 10:14). Joshua had walked closely with God for decades. Think about your own prayer life: is it the

prayer of someone who walks closely and obediently with God day by day, or have your prayers grown distant and formal? What is one step toward a more living dependence on the Lord?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The text marks this day as utterly singular: 'there was no day like that before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man: for the Lord fought for Israel' (Joshua 10:14). The wonder is not only that the sun stood still, but that God so honored the prayer of His servant.

This is a self-examination question about the depth of our walk with God. Joshua had followed the Lord faithfully for decades, from Egypt through the wilderness into the land. His was not a casual acquaintance with God but a long, obedient friendship. The bold prayer arose from that long faithfulness.

Invite the class to examine their own prayer life honestly. Is it the prayer of someone who walks closely and obediently with God day by day, or have their prayers drifted into distance and formality, words said out of habit rather than out of relationship?

Help students see that God hearkening to a man's voice is not a transaction we can engineer but the fruit of a life lived near to Him. The aim is not to manipulate God into spectacular answers but to walk so closely with Him that prayer becomes the natural breath of an obedient heart. Name one concrete step toward that nearness.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- This was a unique day when the Lord hearkened to the voice of a man (Joshua 10:14).
- Joshua's bold prayer flowed from decades of close, obedient walking with God.
- God hearkening to our voice is the fruit of a life lived near Him, not a technique to master (John 15:7).
- We are called not to engineer answers but to walk so closely with God that prayer becomes natural.

Discussion Prompts

- Is your prayer life that of someone who walks closely with God, or has it grown distant?
- How does Joshua's long faithfulness relate to his bold prayer?
- What is one concrete step toward a more living dependence on the Lord?

Question 7

Student Question:

Five times in this chapter we are told some form of 'the Lord fought for Israel,' and 'the Lord discomfited them' (Joshua 10:10, 14, 42). Yet Israel still marched, still swung swords, still chased the enemy through the night. How does this chapter hold together God's sovereign action and human effort, and what does that teach us about working hard while trusting God completely?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Throughout the chapter the refrain is unmistakable: 'the Lord discomfited them before Israel' (Joshua 10:10), the Lord cast down the hailstones, the Lord hearkened to Joshua, 'the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel' (Joshua 10:42). The victory is plainly God's from start to finish.

And yet Israel is anything but passive. They march all night, they fall upon the enemy with a great slaughter, they chase the fleeing kings, they swing their swords. The chapter holds two truths together without strain: the Lord fights, and Israel works.

This is the biblical pattern, not a contradiction. God's sovereignty does not cancel human effort; it grounds it. Israel could labor hard precisely because they knew the Lord was fighting for them. 'Work out your own salvation... for it is God which worketh in you' (Philippians 2:12-13). We labor, and God works in our labor.

Help the class avoid both errors. One says, 'God will do it all, so I need not act,' and sits idle. The other says, 'It all depends on me,' and collapses under the weight. The truth is that we work with all our might while trusting that the victory belongs wholly to God. Joshua marched all night, and the Lord fought for Israel.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The chapter repeatedly insists the Lord fought for Israel and won the victory (Joshua 10:10, 14, 42).
- Yet Israel still marched, fought, and pursued with all their strength.
- God's sovereignty grounds human effort rather than cancelling it (Philippians 2:12-13).
- We are to work hard while trusting that the victory belongs wholly to God.

Discussion Prompts

- How does this chapter hold together God's action and human effort?
- What are the two opposite errors we must avoid here?
- How can you work hard this week while trusting God completely for the outcome?

Question 8

Student Question:

Joshua refused to let his soldiers rest while the enemy still fled; he pressed the pursuit to the very end and would not stop short of complete victory (Joshua 10:19-21). Where in your own walk with God are you tempted to stop short, to settle for a partial obedience or an unfinished work? What does it look like to 'pursue' to the finish in your life?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

When the five kings hide in a cave, Joshua does not let the battle slow: 'stay ye not, but pursue after your enemies... suffer them not to enter into their cities: for the Lord your God hath delivered them into your hand' (Joshua 10:19). He refuses to rest while the enemy still flees.

Joshua presses the pursuit to the very end, until 'all the people returned to the camp... in peace' (Joshua 10:21), the work finished. He would not settle for a half-won victory or let a fleeing enemy regroup to fight another day.

This is a self-examination question. We are forever tempted to stop short, to settle for partial obedience, to leave the hard last stretch undone. We break the obvious sins but coddle the hidden ones; we begin the work of repentance but do not press it home; we win the easy battles and let the stubborn ones flee.

Help the class name where they are tempted to stop short. What sin have they wounded but not killed? What obedience have they begun but not finished? Pursuing to the end is not legalism; it is taking sin and obedience as seriously as Joshua took the fleeing kings, because a half-won battle in the soul is soon a lost one.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Joshua refused to let his men rest while the enemy still fled (Joshua 10:19-21).
- We are tempted to stop short, settling for partial obedience and half-won victories.
- An enemy left to flee, like a sin left half-conquered, soon returns to fight again.
- Pursuing to the end means taking sin and obedience as seriously as Joshua took the kings (Hebrews 12:1).

Discussion Prompts

- Where are you tempted to stop short of complete obedience?
- What sin have you wounded but not yet fully put to death?
- What does it look like to 'pursue' to the finish in your walk with God?

Question 9

Student Question:

This chapter records the destruction of the southern cities as the Lord fought for Israel, an act of covenant judgment on the entrenched wickedness of the Canaanite nations, by God's direct command at a unique moment in His plan (Joshua 10:40-42). How are we to understand the conquest rightly: not as a warrant for human violence or holy war today, but as God's just and unrepeatable judgment, while holding firmly to His patient grace and to the truth that our warfare now is spiritual (2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Ephesians 6:10-18)?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the doctrinal high point, and it must be handled with reverence and care. The chapter closes with Israel taking the southern cities, as 'the Lord God of Israel fought for Israel' (Joshua 10:40–42). We must understand the conquest rightly, neither flinching from it nor twisting it.

Frame it first as covenant judgment. This was not Israel's vengeance but God's justice, long delayed, falling at last on nations whose wickedness had filled up its measure. Centuries earlier God had told Abraham that his descendants would not yet possess the land, 'for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full' (Genesis 15:16). God waited generations, patient and just, until the appointed hour.

Frame it next as unique and unrepeatable. This was God's direct command at one specific moment in redemptive history, executed by His own word and His own hand, with hailstones from heaven and the sun standing still. It is in no way a pattern for human violence, vengeance, or holy war in our day. To use it so is to wrench it utterly out of its place in God's plan.

Hold God's justice and His grace together. The same God who judged the Canaanites had patiently spared Rahab and even the deceiving Gibeonites who sought refuge among His people. His judgment is real, and so is His mercy to all who turn to Him. He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that they turn and live (Ezekiel 18:23, 32).

Then point clearly to the Christian's warfare now. Under the gospel, our battle is not against flesh and blood. 'Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God' (2 Corinthians 10:3–4). We 'wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers' (Ephesians 6:12), and we fight with the armor of God, not the sword of iron. The conquest belongs to its own moment; our holy war is wholly spiritual.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The conquest was God's covenant judgment on entrenched Canaanite wickedness, not human vengeance (Joshua 10:40–42).
- God waited patiently for generations until the iniquity of the Amorites was full (Genesis 15:16).
- This was a unique, unrepeatable act by God's direct command, never a warrant for human violence or holy war today.
- God's justice and His patient grace are held together; He spared Rahab and the Gibeonites who sought Him (Ezekiel 18:23, 32).
- The Christian's warfare is now wholly spiritual, fought with God's armor, not against flesh and blood (2 Corinthians 10:3–5; Ephesians 6:10–18).
- We must neither flinch from God's justice nor twist His act into a pattern for our own violence.

Discussion Prompts

- How are we to understand the conquest rightly, as covenant judgment rather than human vengeance?
- Why is it crucial to see this as unique and unrepeatable, not a warrant for violence today?
- What is the nature of the Christian's warfare now, and how is it different?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back over the whole long day at Gibeon, from Joshua's night march to the sun standing still to the Lord casting down stones from heaven. Name one specific way this chapter is strengthening your trust in God. What is the Lord teaching you about His power, His faithfulness to His promises, and His willingness to fight for those who are His, that you need to carry into this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the capstone. Invite the class to look back over the whole long day at Gibeon: the night march of mercy, the word 'fear not,' the hailstones from heaven, the sun standing still, the Lord fighting for His people. Ask what the Lord is forming in them through all of it.

At the center of every scene stands the same God, and He has not changed. He still keeps His promises, still goes before His people, still rules the sun and the storm, still fights for those who are His. The chapter is finally a portrait of His power and faithfulness, meant to anchor our trust.

Press for the personal application. For the fearful in the class, the word is 'fear not, I have delivered them into thine hand.' For the weary, the comfort is that the Lord fights for His own. For the proud in their own strength, the lesson is that the victory is God's. Let each name the place where this chapter touches their life.

Close by lifting their eyes to Christ. The God who fought for Israel with hailstones now fights for His people through the cross and the empty tomb, winning the only battle that finally matters. The same faithful Lord who kept every promise to Israel has kept His greatest promise in His Son. Ask each student to name one fear to surrender and one promise of God to lean on this week.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Joshua 10 is finally a portrait of God's power and faithfulness toward His people.
- The God who fought for Israel still keeps His promises and goes before His own.
- The chapter speaks to the fearful, the weary, and the self-reliant alike.
- Christ is the goal; the God who fought for Israel now fights for His people through the cross (Romans 8:31-32).
- Each student should name one fear to surrender and one promise of God to lean on this week.

Discussion Prompts

- As you look back over the long day at Gibeon, how is this chapter strengthening your trust in God?
- What fear do you most need to surrender to the Lord who goes before you?
- What promise of God do you need to lean on this week?