

The Book of Joshua, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 10: Dividing the Land; Caleb's Inheritance

Joshua 13:1–15:63

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

The doctrinal center of this lesson is God's covenant faithfulness. These chapters can feel like an endless survey of boundaries and town lists, but underneath every line lies a single triumphant fact: the God who swore this land to Abraham, when Abraham owned not a foot of it, has now kept His word in full. Help the class hear Joshua 21:43–45 over the whole section, that 'there failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken,' and that 'all came to pass.' The aim is to lift the students' eyes from the dust of the allotments to the glory of a promise-keeping God, and to let that fact strengthen their grip on every promise He has made to them in Christ.

Guard the land promise carefully. The land is a real, historical fulfillment of God's oath to Abraham, and we should say so plainly. But Scripture itself will not let the land be the end of the story. Hebrews 4 takes Canaan and Israel's rest and shows them to be a shadow of the better, eternal rest that still remains for the people of God, a rest we enter by faith in Christ. Resist every reading that turns these chapters into a blueprint for a future earthly political Israel; the promises to Abraham find their yes in Christ and His church, where there is neither Jew nor Greek and all who belong to Him are Abraham's heirs (Galatians 3:16, 26–29). Teach the land as kept promise and as pointer, both at once.

Finally, make Caleb come alive for spiritual formation. He is the human heart of this lesson, an old man who wholly followed the Lord for forty-five years and asked, at eighty-five, for the mountain of the giants. Press his example into your students: wholehearted, persevering, lifelong faith; courage rooted in God's presence rather than personal strength; and a refusal to let age or hardship shrink the soul. The aim is not merely that they admire Caleb, but that they decide, today, to follow the Lord wholly to the end and to face their own mountain in His strength.

Question 1

Student Question:

When God speaks to the aging Joshua, He does not say the conquest is finished; He says 'there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed' (Joshua 13:1), and yet He also commands Joshua to divide the whole land as an inheritance (Joshua 13:6–7). How do these two realities hold together, the land already given by promise and the land still to be possessed by faith, and what does this teach us about how God's promises actually come to us?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The section opens on a tension we feel immediately. Joshua is 'old and stricken in years,' and the Lord acknowledges 'there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed' (Joshua 13:1). Yet in the same breath God commands him to 'divide thou it by lot unto the Israelites for an inheritance' (Joshua 13:6-7). The land is to be apportioned as a settled gift even while much of it is still in enemy hands.

This is no contradiction; it is the very shape of faith. In the covenant sense the land is already Israel's, given by the sworn word of God. In the experiential sense it must still be entered, settled, and possessed tribe by tribe. The promise is sure; the possessing is the work of faith over time.

We meet the same pattern all through Scripture and all through the Christian life. God declares a thing done by His word and then calls His people to walk into it. The victory is granted, yet there is ground to take. The inheritance is given, yet it must be claimed.

Help the class see that this is how God's promises usually come to us, not as a finished package dropped in our laps, but as a sure word we are called to act upon. The dividing of the land before it is fully conquered is God teaching Israel, and us, to live by faith and not by sight.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God's promises are at once already given by His word and still to be possessed by faith; both are true at the same time.
- The certainty of a promise does not remove the call to work; God grants the land and commands Israel to take it.
- Faith lives in the gap between the promise spoken and the promise fully seen (2 Corinthians 5:7).
- The dividing of land not yet conquered trains Israel to act on God's word before the outcome is in hand.

Discussion Prompts

- How can the land be both already given and still to be possessed at the same time?
- Why does God grant a sure promise and still command His people to work to take it?
- Where do we see this same pattern in the Christian life, the promise sure yet the ground still to be claimed?

Question 2

Student Question:

God told Joshua to divide land that had not yet been fully taken, calling Israel to live on the strength of a promise rather than the sight of a finished victory. Where in your life right now are you being asked to step forward and live as though God's promise is already true, before you can see it fully accomplished?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

God called Israel to settle and live in land that, in many places, was not yet fully theirs in experience. They were to plant, build, and dwell on the strength of His word rather than the evidence of a completed conquest (Joshua 13:1–7).

This is a self-examination question. Invite students to locate the place where God is asking them to step forward and live as though His promise is already true, before they can see it fully accomplished.

Often we wait for total clarity before we move, but faith rarely gets that luxury. Israel had to begin living in the land while borders were still contested. We are likewise asked to obey, forgive, give, or step out while the outcome is still unseen.

Encourage the class to name one concrete area where they are holding back until they can see more, and to consider what it would mean to act now on what God has already promised and said.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Faith frequently calls us to act on God's promise before we can see it fully accomplished.
- Waiting for total certainty before we move is often unbelief in disguise.
- Living on the strength of God's word is the ordinary shape of the obedient life (Hebrews 11:8).
- Naming the specific place we are holding back is the first step toward stepping forward in faith.

Discussion Prompts

- Where is God asking you to live as though His promise is already true, before you see it fully?
- What are you waiting to see before you obey, and is that wait faith or fear?
- What is one concrete step of acting on God's word you could take this week?

Question 3

Student Question:

Twice the Scripture says Caleb 'wholly followed the Lord God of Israel' (Joshua 14:8, 14), and Caleb himself traces it back forty-five years to the day he brought back a faithful report when ten others spread fear (Joshua 14:7–9; Numbers 14:24). What does it mean to wholly follow the Lord, and how does Caleb's life show us that such faith is the steady work of a lifetime and not a single moment?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Twice the text crowns Caleb with the same phrase: he 'wholly followed the Lord God of Israel' (Joshua 14:8, 14). Caleb himself reaches back forty-five years to the moment that defined him, when he 'brought him word again as it was in mine heart' while ten spies melted the people's courage (Joshua 14:7-9; Numbers 14:24).

To wholly follow the Lord does not mean Caleb was sinless; it means his heart was undivided. He followed God fully, holding nothing back, refusing the fearful compromise of the majority. His was a whole-hearted allegiance, all in, all the way.

Notice that this commendation spans his entire adult life. The faith Caleb showed as a younger spy he is still showing as an old man asking for his mountain. The word 'wholly' covers forty-five years. His faith was not a single brave moment but a sustained, lifelong direction.

For the class this redefines great faith. We often picture it as a heroic instant. Caleb shows it is more often a long obedience in the same direction, a heart that keeps following fully through decades of waiting, disappointment, and ordinary days. That is the faith God commends.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- To wholly follow the Lord is to follow Him with an undivided heart, holding nothing back (1 Kings 8:61).
- Whole-hearted faith is proven not in a single moment but over the long span of a lifetime.
- Caleb's faith stood against the crowd; following God fully sometimes means standing nearly alone (Numbers 14:24).
- God notices and commends the heart that keeps following Him fully through years of waiting.

Discussion Prompts

- What does it mean to 'wholly follow' the Lord, and how is that different from following Him partly?
- How does Caleb's life show that whole-hearted faith is a lifelong work, not a single moment?
- Where is your own following of the Lord most tempted to become divided or half-hearted?

Question 4

Student Question:

Caleb is eighty-five years old when he says, 'as yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me' (Joshua 14:11), and he asks for the hardest inheritance rather than the easiest. When have you been tempted to think your most useful days for God are behind you, and how does Caleb's bold old age challenge that thought?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Caleb is eighty-five and entirely undaunted: 'as yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me' (Joshua 14:11). Rather than asking for an easy retirement in a settled valley, he asks for the hill country where the giants still live (Joshua 14:12).

This is a transformational question aimed at the lie that our most useful days are behind us. Caleb's age, in his own mind, is no reason to step back; it is the seasoned platform from which he steps forward into the hardest assignment.

Many believers quietly retire their faith long before they retire from work, assuming the bold callings belong to the young. Caleb refuses that script. His best and boldest request comes at eighty-five.

Help the class examine where they have begun to coast, telling themselves they have already had their season of usefulness. Then hold up Caleb: the God who kept him strong is not finished with anyone whose heart still wholly follows the Lord.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Faithfulness to God is a calling for every season of life, including old age (Psalm 92:14).
- The belief that our useful days are behind us is a temptation, not a fact, for the one who wholly follows the Lord.
- Caleb asked for the hardest task at the oldest age; mature faith reaches forward, not merely backward.
- God measures usefulness by a heart that still follows fully, not by youth or ease.

Discussion Prompts

- When have you been tempted to think your most useful days for God are behind you?
- What does Caleb's request at eighty-five say to that thought?
- What would it look like to step forward in faith in your current season rather than coast?

Question 5

Student Question:

Caleb says, 'if so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out' (Joshua 14:12), looking straight at the Anakim, the very giants that had terrified the ten spies and a whole generation. Where did Caleb's courage come from, and how does his confidence in the Lord's presence, rather than in his own strength, instruct our courage today?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Caleb looks straight at the Anakim, the very giants whose report once made a whole generation's heart melt, and says, 'if so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out' (Joshua 14:12). The thing that terrified ten spies does not move him.

The source of his courage is named precisely: 'if the Lord will be with me.' Caleb's confidence is not in his arm but in God's presence. He is strong, but he does not lean on his strength; he leans on the Lord who promised to be with him.

This is the difference between the ten spies and Caleb at the very same sight. They measured the giants against themselves and despaired; Caleb measured the giants against God and pressed on. Same giants, opposite conclusions, because of where their eyes rested.

For the class, this reframes courage. Biblical courage is not the absence of giants or the confidence of self; it is confidence in the presence of God. The question is never whether we are strong enough, but whether the Lord is with us, and He has promised that He is (Hebrews 13:5-6).

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- True courage rests on the presence of God, not on personal strength (Joshua 1:9).
- The same obstacle looks small or impossible depending on whether we measure it against ourselves or against God.
- Caleb faced the very giants that defeated a generation, proving the problem was never the giants but unbelief.
- God's promise to be with His people is the ground of all godly boldness (Hebrews 13:5-6).

Discussion Prompts

- Where did Caleb's courage come from, and how was it different from mere self-confidence?
- Why did the same giants defeat ten spies but not Caleb?
- What 'giant' are you facing, and how does the promise of God's presence change how you see it?

Question 6

Student Question:

For forty-five years Caleb carried Moses's promise in his heart while a whole generation died in the wilderness around him for their unbelief (Numbers 14:24, 30). When have you had to keep believing a promise of God through a long, painful season caused partly by other people's failures, and what kept your faith alive?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Caleb carried Moses's promise in his heart for forty-five years (Joshua 14:10), and most of those years were spent watching an entire generation die in the wilderness for the unbelief he had refused to share (Numbers 14:24, 30). He paid, in part, for other people's failure.

This is a personal question about keeping faith through a long, hard season we did not cause. Caleb wandered four decades not for his own sin but because of a generation's rejection of God, yet he never let bitterness erode his trust.

Invite students to name a stretch of waiting or loss shaped largely by other people's choices, a failure of leadership, a betrayal, a family's unbelief, and to consider what kept, or could keep, their faith alive in it.

Caleb's secret was that he fixed his hope on the promise of God rather than on the behavior of people. Because he believed God would keep His word, the failures around him could delay him but not destroy his faith. That is a hope worth imitating.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Faith must sometimes endure long seasons of hardship caused partly by the failures of others.
- Bitterness over others' sin can quietly destroy our own faith if we let it; Caleb refused that path.
- Hope anchored in God's promise outlasts disappointment in people (Romans 5:3-5).
- God remembers the faithful through the long delay, even when their waiting is not their fault.

Discussion Prompts

- When have you had to keep believing God through a hard season caused partly by others' failures?
- What kept your faith alive, or what could have?
- How does Caleb's freedom from bitterness over the wilderness years speak to you?

Question 7

Student Question:

Caleb received Hebron 'because that he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel' (Joshua 14:14), and God is described again and again in these chapters as the one who gives the inheritance He had sworn (Joshua 13:6; 14:9). What do these chapters reveal about how God remembers and rewards those who faithfully follow Him, and how do we hold this truth without turning grace into mere payment for service?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Caleb receives Hebron 'because that he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel' (Joshua 14:14), and these chapters repeatedly present God as the one who gives the inheritance He had sworn (Joshua 13:6; 14:9). God remembers the faithful and keeps His specific word to them.

We must hold this rightly. The whole land is grace, the unearned gift of a promise-keeping God to a people who deserved nothing. And yet Scripture is unembarrassed to connect Caleb's particular inheritance to his faithful following. God is no man's debtor, and He delights to honor those who trust Him.

The balance to guard is this: faithfulness is not a wage that puts God in our debt, but the path along which His promised grace is received and enjoyed. Caleb did not earn salvation by his loyalty; he received the fullness of the promised inheritance by following the God who freely gave it.

For the class, this is deeply encouraging without becoming mercenary. God sees. God remembers. The long years of wholly following Him are not wasted or forgotten. He is faithful to reward those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6), yet the reward itself is grace from first to last.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- God remembers and honors those who faithfully follow Him; their loyalty is not overlooked (Hebrews 6:10).
- The inheritance is grace, the gift of a promise-keeping God, never a wage that puts Him in our debt (Romans 4:4–5).
- Faithfulness is the path along which God's promised grace is received, not the price that purchases it.
- God rewards those who diligently seek Him, yet the reward itself remains grace from beginning to end (Hebrews 11:6).

Discussion Prompts

- What do these chapters show about how God remembers those who follow Him faithfully?
- How do we hold together grace and reward without turning faith into mere payment for service?
- How does it encourage you that your years of following the Lord are not forgotten by Him?

Question 8

Student Question:

After the land is divided, the record quietly notes that Judah 'could not drive out' the Jebusites in Jerusalem, who dwelt with them 'unto this day' (Joshua 15:63), a small failure tucked among the victories. Where in your own life is there a 'Jebusite' you have learned to tolerate and live alongside instead of dealing with it, and why is partial obedience so easy to make peace with?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Amid the victories the record drops a quiet, sobering note: 'the children of Judah could not drive out' the Jebusites in Jerusalem, who 'dwell with the children of Judah at Jerusalem unto this day' (Joshua 15:63). A pocket of unconquered enemy is left to live alongside God's people.

This is a self-examination question. The Jebusite who 'dwelt with' Judah pictures the sin or compromise we stop fighting and learn to live beside. What was meant to be driven out becomes a tolerated neighbor.

Partial obedience is comfortable precisely because it looks like obedience. Judah took the land; they simply left one stronghold standing. We do much the same, surrendering most of the field to God while quietly reserving a corner for an old habit or grudge.

Help the class name, honestly, the 'Jebusite' they have made peace with, and remind them that what we tolerate today often troubles us 'unto this day' tomorrow. Israel's unfinished business in Jerusalem would haunt them for generations. So does ours.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Partial obedience leaves enemies standing that will trouble us for years to come (Judges 1:21; 2:1-3).
- Sin we learn to live beside rather than drive out becomes a tolerated, settled presence.
- What looks like near-complete obedience can quietly hide a stronghold we have refused to surrender.
- Honest naming of the 'Jebusite' is the first step toward dealing with it rather than tolerating it.

Discussion Prompts

- Where is there a 'Jebusite' in your life you have learned to live alongside rather than deal with?
- Why is partial obedience so easy to make peace with?
- What would it look like to stop tolerating that one stronghold and bring it under God's lordship?

Question 9

Student Question:

These long chapters are, at their heart, the fulfillment of the promise God made to Abraham centuries earlier, that his descendants would possess this land (Genesis 12:7; 15:18-21; compare Joshua 21:43-45). Yet the New Testament insists that this land and this rest were never the final word, but a shadow of a greater rest that still remains for the people of God (Hebrews 4:1-11), and that all the promises find their yes in Christ and His church (Galatians 3:16, 26-29). How does the dividing of Canaan display God's covenant faithfulness, and how should we understand

the land promise rightly, as a real and kept promise that points beyond itself to the eternal inheritance we have in Christ?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

At its heart this whole section is the fulfillment of an ancient promise. Centuries before, God swore to Abraham, 'Unto thy seed have I given this land' (Genesis 12:7; 15:18–21), when Abraham had no land and no son. Now the boundaries are drawn and the towns named, and the summary will soon ring out: 'there failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken; all came to pass' (Joshua 21:43–45). This is covenant faithfulness made visible in dirt and stone.

Take time to let the class feel the weight of that. Every tedious border in these chapters is a kept word. The God who keeps these lists is the God who keeps His promises, down to the last detail, across the span of four hundred years. If He kept His word to Abraham this fully, we can trust every word He has spoken to us in Christ.

But Scripture itself refuses to let Canaan be the end of the story. Hebrews 4 takes Israel's entrance into the land and Israel's rest and reveals them as a shadow: 'There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God' (Hebrews 4:9). The earthly inheritance was real, and it was always pointing past itself to a greater, eternal rest entered by faith in Christ. Joshua gave Israel rest in the land, yet Hebrews says a better rest still remained, which means the land was never the final goal.

Guard this carefully for the class. The promises to Abraham find their 'yes' in Christ, not in a future earthly political Israel. Paul says the promise was spoken to Abraham's seed, 'which is Christ' (Galatians 3:16), and that 'if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise' (Galatians 3:29). The kingdom is Christ's present reign, and His church is the one family in whom the land promise reaches its true and lasting fulfillment.

So teach the land as both. It is a real, historical, fully kept promise, proof that God does what He says. And it is a signpost, lifting our eyes from a strip of earth on the Mediterranean to the eternal inheritance, the better country, the rest that remains for the people of God in Christ. To stop at the earthly land is to read Joshua as if Hebrews had never been written. To despise the earthly land is to miss the faithfulness it displays. Hold both, and let Christ be the goal.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The division of Canaan is the historical fulfillment of God's sworn promise to Abraham (Genesis 12:7; 15:18–21; Joshua 21:43–45).
- Every detailed boundary is a kept word; God's covenant faithfulness is displayed down to the last town.
- The land and Israel's rest were a shadow of the greater, eternal rest that still remains for the people of God in Christ (Hebrews 4:1–11).

- The promises to Abraham find their yes in Christ, the true Seed, and in His church, not in a future earthly political Israel (Galatians 3:16, 29).
- Avoid premillennial and dispensational readings; the kingdom is Christ's present reign and His church is the one family of promise (Galatians 3:26–29).
- Teach the land as both a kept promise and a pointer; stopping at the earthly land ignores Hebrews, while despising it misses God's faithfulness.

Discussion Prompts

- How does the dividing of Canaan display God's faithfulness to the promise He made to Abraham?
- How does Hebrews 4 show that the land and its rest were pointing to something greater?
- Why is it important to see the land promise fulfilled in Christ and His church rather than in a future political Israel?

Question 10

Student Question:

Look back over these chapters, the old man told there is still much land to possess, the long roll of kept promises, and Caleb standing before his mountain at eighty-five. Name one specific way the Lord is calling you to follow Him more wholly and to keep claiming the inheritance He has promised. What is the 'mountain' He is asking you to face this week?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This is the capstone. Invite the class to look back across the whole section: the old man told there is still much land to possess, the long roll of kept promises tribe by tribe, and Caleb standing before his mountain at eighty-five, refusing the easy valley.

Three threads have run through it all. God keeps His word completely. There is always more ground to take by faith. And the Lord is looking for people who will follow Him wholly, to the last hill, at any age. Help students name where the Spirit is pressing one of these threads into their own lives.

For some the word is Caleb's: stop coasting, ask God for the mountain, follow Him wholly again. For others it is the comfort of a promise-keeping God who has not forgotten their long faithfulness. For still others it is the call to drive out a tolerated 'Jebusite' at last.

Close by lifting their eyes to Christ. The land was a kept promise and a shadow of the better rest that is ours in Him. The God who divided the inheritance among the tribes has, in Christ, secured for us an inheritance that cannot fade (1 Peter 1:4). Ask each student to name one specific way they will follow the Lord more wholly and one 'mountain' they will face in His strength this week.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The section's threads converge: God keeps His word, there is ground still to take, and He seeks whole-hearted followers.
- Spiritual formation moves from admiring Caleb to imitating him, deciding to follow the Lord wholly today.
- Christ is the goal; the earthly inheritance points to the unfading inheritance secured for us in Him (1 Peter 1:4).
- Each student should name one way to follow the Lord more wholly and one 'mountain' to face in His strength this week.

Discussion Prompts

- As you look back over these chapters, which thread is the Lord pressing into your life, His faithfulness, the ground still to take, or the call to follow Him wholly?
- What is the one 'mountain' He is asking you to face this week, and how will you face it in His strength?
- How does seeing the land as a pointer to our inheritance in Christ change the way you read these chapters?