

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

JOSHUA 1-4

If the book of Joshua were a video you'd find it in the "Action And Adventure" section - *right between Jaws and Jurassic World...* Joshua is a story of military conquest. It's full of intrigue and espionage - bravery and dedication. It has spectacular battle scenes, with out-of-this-world visual effects. It's a war epic, packed with chills and thrills, *but it also has other meanings...*

In this book you'll find lessons in **leadership**, on **organization**, on **military strategy**, even on biblical **prophecy**. *Yet most profoundly it speaks **spiritually**...*

Joshua is for Christians who desire to live a life of victory. Moses led Israel to the border of the Promised Land, but couldn't bring them in. Moses represented the Law, while "Joshua" is the Hebrew word for the Greek name, "Jesus." The Law could never bring us into God's rest. Our victory is in Christ! This OT book shows NT believers how to win battles with Jesus!

The book of Joshua is divided into two sections. The first 12 chapters describe *the conquest of the land*. The last 12 chapters *the land's division and settlement*.

The first 9 verses of Chapter 1 could be subtitled "The Making of a Leader." They introduce us to Israel's new chief, and his qualifications for leadership. In fact, as we read through Chapter 1, let me point out to you seven principles for leadership... *If you want to be a leader in the church here's a good place to start...*

Verse 1, "After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, it came to pass that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying..." And here's leadership principle #1, **preparation**. Before taking the helm Joshua had been an assistant to Moses. Before assuming *leadership* he first served an *apprenticeship*.

Billy Graham was once quoted as saying, "If I knew the Lord was coming back in three years, I would spend two years studying and one year preaching."

Never underestimate the importance of preparation. Before a person can lead they first must be willing to be led. Here the Hebrew term "**assistant**" refers to a menial role - *a servant, a waiter*. Joshua will lead a nation into God's promises, but for a time his job description was simply "**do what Moses tells you to do.**"

God says to Joshua, verse 2, "**Moses My servant is dead.**" *Stunning words*. For the last forty years the people had looked to Moses. Now their leader is dead, yet the journey isn't over. Israel needs a new leader.

“Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them - the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses.” Leadership principle #2 is **purpose**. A good leader has to have a purpose. A spiritual leader gets a vision from God - then sets out to fulfill that vision.

Harry Truman said, “I wonder how far Moses would have gone if he had taken a poll in Egypt? What would Jesus have preached if He’d taken a poll in Israel?... It isn’t the polls or the public opinion of the moment that counts. It’s right and wrong and leadership - men with fortitude, honesty, and a belief in the right - that makes epochs.” Your church, community, and family needs leadership with conviction and godly purpose. A true leader sticks to His purpose even if it’s not popular.

God continues in verse 4, “From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory.” Leadership principle # 3 is **perspective**. God wants Joshua to have a grasp on the big picture.

His men are eager to fight, but their leader needs a broader perspective. Here he’s given detail of what he’s fighting for. This will enable him to determine *where* and *when* to fight. Perspective is what makes a good leader. Joshua learned to be a *big picture person*.

Verse 5, No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you...” Here’s leadership principle #4, **persuasion**. Joshua isn’t dependent on other people’s initiative. He is willing to take a stand... He’ll say, “*Follow me, as I follow God.*”

It was said of a successful leader, “His great attribute was that he made decisions. You never had to say, ‘*Well what are we going to do tomorrow?*’ He told you. We need leaders who aren’t afraid to give direction. Who’ll let their followers know where they’re going.

Leadership principle #5 we could call **people**. God tells Joshua, verse 6, “Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.” Once the land is conquered Joshua will have to divvy it up, and that will plunge him into the nitty gritty of dealing with personalities, and quirks, and complaints - people problems. It’s true, *in the midst of battle people take orders, but during peace time people question orders.*

Joshua is to be a servant to the people. *He’ll have to listen... show some understanding... put up with their peculiarities.* A good leader serves people. He cares.

It's been said, "You can't be a good shepherd if you can't stand the smell of sheep." You got to love people.

Verse 7 God tells Joshua, "Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success." Leadership principle #6 is **precept**. A godly leader leads God's people *by the book*. He studies the precepts of Scripture, and acts accordingly.

One of Great Britain's greatest leaders, Oliver Cromwell, commented, "The leader's job is to give the people not what they want, but what is good for them."

And this is the job of a spiritual leader. It's not to tickle ears, but teach God's truth. When a leader departs from the Scripture its *spiritual malpractice*!

Principle #7 I call **presence**. Verse 9 God promises Joshua, "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

John Ruskin once noted, "Really great men have a curious feeling that the greatness is not in them, but through them." The secret of Samson's stupendous strength was not the size of his biceps - *it was the presence of God in his life*. God made Samson strong!

This will be the case for Joshua... *and for us*. For God is still looking for leaders. The Church is an army, and armies need leaders. Our church and your community needs leaders who'll rise up like a Joshua, and say to His people, "*Follow me, as I follow God.*"

Beginning in verse 10 Joshua prepares the Hebrews to cross the Jordan... "Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, 'Pass through the camp and command the people, saying, 'Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you will cross over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you to possess.' "

Eight centuries earlier, God promised the prosperous land of Canaan to Abraham and his heirs. But for 440 years the Hebrews have been slaves in Egypt and nomads in the desert. Now though, the moment has come. Israel holds the title deed to a land flowing with milk and honey. It's time for them to take possession.

Understand **all land is God's land**. Psalm 24:1 tells us, "The earth is the LORD'S,

and all its fullness.” God has every right to give any parcel to any people He chooses. God took the land away from the Canaanites as a punishment and judgment. They were a wicked and evil people. He then gave the land to the Hebrews.

Today’s Palestinians migrated into the land long after God biblically settled the issue of its ownership. The Palestinians have no ultimate claim to the land. There may be cases where families should be compensated for losses, but the land itself belongs to the Jews. It was *promised to Abraham* and *possessed by Joshua*.

Verse 12 is a reminder to the 2 1/2 tribes that took their inheritance east of the Jordan River - *Reuben, Gad, and half of Manasseh*. They could settle on the east bank, but they had to fight with all Israel until the west bank was also conquered. They should take up arms and show their readiness to battle for Israel.

Verse 16, “*And they answered Joshua, saying, "All that you command us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. Just as we heeded Moses in all things, so we will heed you. Only the LORD your God be with you, as He was with Moses. Whoever rebels against your command and does not heed your words, in all that you command him, shall be put to death. Only be strong and of good courage."* They’ll follow an inexperienced Joshua, even if he makes mistakes, *but nobody follows a coward...* He must be courageous!

Chapter 2, “*Now Joshua the son of Nun sent out two men from Acacia Grove to spy secretly, saying, "Go, view the land, especially Jericho."* Recall Moses sent twelve men to spy out the land. All but two returned with a negative report. This time Joshua only sends two. I’m sure they were men of faith. Jewish legend suggests they were Caleb and the High Priest, Eliezer.

Joshua tells them to focus on Jericho. It was the nearest of Canaan’s many city-states. Jericho was a fortified city, seven miles west of the Jordan River. It consisted of seven acres surrounded by a double wall.

Historians tell us Jericho had an outer wall 6 feet thick. Its inner wall was 12 feet. The first wall was 11 feet high. The second wall was 35 feet high, and the wall was tilted at a 35 degree angle. The tilt prohibited anyone from scaling it with ladders. The walls of *Jericho will be Israel’s first major military challenge*.

“*So they went, and came to the house of a harlot named Rahab, and lodged there.*” Some Bible commentators are embarrassed over the fact the spies hid in a harlot’s house. But that’s probably unfair. A prostitute was accustomed to housing strangers. The spies could stay with her and maintain their anonymity.

And isn’t this where *our Joshua* found acceptance when He came to earth? The

religious, priestly crowd hated Jesus. Our Lord was never at home in the Temple. Jesus was embraced by harlots and tax collectors. People who longed for love and forgiveness.

In verse 2 somebody rats on Rahab and squeals to the king about the spies. “And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, “Behold, men have come here tonight from the children of Israel to search out the country.”

“So the king of Jericho sent to Rahab, saying, “Bring out the men who have come to you, who have entered your house, for they have come to search out all the country.” Then the woman took the two men and hid them.” It was a tense moment when Jericho’s gestapo interrogated Rahab. One sneeze from the rooftop and it would’ve been curtains for the spies... *and Rahab.*

“So she said, “Yes, the men came to me, but I did not know where they were from. And it happened as the gate was being shut, when it was dark, that the men went out. Where the men went I do not know; pursue them quickly, for you may overtake them.” (But she had brought them up to the roof and hidden them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order on the roof.)” Rahab *lies* for the *spies*. She says the Israelis have already left the city... *but hurry and you can catch them*. She sent them on a *wild Jews chase*.

Which brings up a provocative question, *are we ever justified in telling a lie?* And for me, the answer is *yes!*

When Nazi Storm troopers rounded up Jews to send to the death camps it was not only excusable, but noble, to lie to save their lives. When lying can avoid a greater evil than the lie itself, *I believe God looks at our heart*. I don’t advocate **situational ethics**, but I do believe in **Spirit-led ethics**. 2 Corinthians 3:6 tells us, “*the letter* (of the Law) *kills, but the Spirit gives life.*”

A strict, wooden, legalistic interpretation of the Law doesn’t consider life’s many ironies. That’s why God gives us His Holy Spirit. God’s Spirit helps us apply morals and ethics in loving, consistent, godly ways.

Verse 7, “Then the men pursued them by the road to the Jordan, to the fords. And as soon as those who pursued them had gone out, they shut the gate.” And Rahab’s lie succeeded in protecting the spies. The two Israeli coverts would be safe, until the posse returned.

“Now before they lay down, she came up to them on the roof, and said to the men: “I know that the LORD has given you the land, that the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you.” Amazingly, Rahab

was a believer. She knew Israel's God was the Almighty God.

Evidently, she had heard stories from travelers who visited her brothel. "For we have heard how the LORD dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom you utterly destroyed."

Verse 11, "And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath. Now therefore, I beg you, swear to me by the LORD, since I have shown you kindness, that you also will show kindness to my father's house, and give me a true token, and spare my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death." What a statement of faith!

This harlot had heard of what God did in Egypt, and east of the Jordan. She realized Israel's God was the one, true God. She knows Jericho will fall and the Hebrews will triumph - so she tries to position herself on the winning team! *Hey, God's side always wins!* If you're a smart person you'll also want to join His team!

"So the men answered her, "Our lives for yours, if none of you tell this business of ours. And it shall be, when the LORD has given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with you." A prostitute is promised a place in God's family. There's no way to soften this, Rahab was a hooker - a woman who sold her body for sexual favors. She'd fallen off the ladder of morality a long time ago. Obviously, it was not Rahab's lilly-white goodness, or purity that saved her - *it was her faith!*

And it's by faith we're saved. If God saved Rahab, He can save you! Both Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25 take note of the faith of Rahab. If you want to know the extent to which faith can save, check out Matthew 1:5... in the lineage of Jesus, the spotless lamb - in *the pedigree of the purest* you'll find Rahab the harlot. A testimony to the saving power of faith in God's mercy!

"Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the city wall; she dwelt on the wall." In ancient cities houses were built between the two walls. And it was Rahab's "*hole in the wall*" where the two Israeli spies found refuge.

"And she said to them, "Get to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you. Hide there three days, until the pursuers have returned. Afterward you may go your way." Rahab helps these men and trusts them with her destiny. She believes they'll recall her faith when the city falls. But often vital matters get lost in the details, so the men tell Rahab when the battle takes place she needs to identify her house with a scarlet cord in her window... stay in the house (don't wander outside)... and don't tip off the Jericho

authorities of their visit...

We're told her response in verse 21, "According to your words, so be it. And she sent them away, and they departed. And she bound the scarlet cord in the window." So let's recap... Two spies rappel the wall on a rope from Rahab's window. They hide three days in the surrounding hills; then return to their camp. When Jericho falls Rahab is saved because of the scarlet cord hanging in her window. Whether the cord was the rope used by the spies we're not told, but it becomes a symbol of Rahab's salvation, *and our salvation as well!*

For Jesus too came to earth to spy out the land... He hung and was lowered from a scarlet rope, literally a blood-stained cross... Afterwards he hid for three days in the grave... Jesus then rose from the dead, and ascended to heaven. He returned to camp... But He's coming again to judge the world, and the only folks who'll be saved are those who are holding on to the scarlet cord... It's all a picture of the work of our Savior.

Verse 22, "They departed and went to the mountain, and stayed there three days until the pursuers returned. The pursuers sought them all along the way, but did not find them. So the two men returned, descended from the mountain, and crossed over; and they came to Joshua the son of Nun, and told him all that had befallen them. And they said to Joshua, "Truly the LORD has delivered all the land into our hands, for indeed all the inhabitants of the country are fainthearted because of us." Because of God's power in their exodus Israel's enemies were scared spit-less.

Chapter 3 recounts the day for which the Hebrews had waited 440 years. Joshua mobilizes the people of Israel to cross the Jordan River. "Then Joshua rose early in the morning; and they set out from Acacia Grove and came to the Jordan, he and all the children of Israel, and lodged there before they crossed over.

So it was, after three days, that the officers went through the camp; and they commanded the people, saying, "When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests, the Levites, bearing it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure." Since a cubit was 18" - 2000 cubits equals 3000 feet. The people were to stay roughly 3/5 of a mile behind the Ark. The Ark represented God's holiness. It carried the Mosaic Law.

The distance between the Ark of the Covenant and the people of Israel represented the separation that existed between God and those living under the Law.

Joshua continues, "Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you

must go, for you have not passed this way before." And Joshua said to the people, "Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do wonders among you." For three days the nation had camped by the river. They'd watched the raging water swollen by the spring rains - and I'm sure they pondered how 2-3 million Hebrews would manage to cross a turbulent river. *Here's the Jordan in the spring!*

Interestingly, Joshua didn't send out his Army Corp of Engineers to concoct a plan. The mechanics of the crossing were God's problem. That's why Joshua sent out the Ark. The Ark of the Covenant spoke of God's presence. Joshua trusted in God, not Israeli ingenuity.

Verse 6 "Then Joshua spoke to the priests, saying, "Take up the ark of the covenant and cross over before the people." So they took up the ark of the covenant and went before the people." Joshua had the Ark lead the way, for it's God Who'll lead His people into battle.

And the LORD said to Joshua, "This day I will begin to exalt you in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. You shall command the priests who bear the ark of the covenant, saying, 'When you have come to the edge of the water of the Jordan, you shall stand in the Jordan.'"

The Levites who bear the Ark are to stand in the water's edge - take a step into the raging water - **and expect God to work a wonder!** *Think about this...* To the priests the river is the problem. But God doesn't ask Joshua to address the river. God asks Joshua to bring God to his problem. God will deal with the river...

And this is how faith works. What does God expect from us? *Pray!* Addressing the problem isn't our job. That's God's job. Our responsibility is to bring God to the problem. Connect your problem to God, and He'll deal with it. *Have you stepped into the water with God?*

"So Joshua said to the children of Israel, "Come here, and hear the words of the LORD your God.

And Joshua said, "By this you shall know that the living God is among you, and that He will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites and Hittites and Hivites and Perizzites and Girgashites and Amorites and Jebusites:" Seven nations will be evicted.

"Behold, the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth is crossing over before you into the Jordan. Now therefore, take for yourselves twelve men from the tribes of Israel, one man from every tribe. And it shall come to pass, as soon as the soles of the feet of the priests who bear the ark of the LORD, the Lord of all the earth, shall rest in the waters of the Jordan, that the waters of the Jordan shall be cut off, the waters that

come down from upstream, and they shall stand as a heap.” The same miracle God used to deliver Israel from Egypt, God will use again to bring Israel into the Promised Land. *Same God will do the same miracle.*

“So it was, when the people set out from their camp to cross over the Jordan, with the priests bearing the ark of the covenant before the people, and as those who bore the ark came to the Jordan, and the feet of the priests who bore the ark dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks during the whole time of harvest)...” This is not summer, when the Jordan dries to a trickle. This miracle occurred in the spring when the melting snows from the peaks of Mount Hermon causes the river to overflow its banks.

And the moment the priestly toe dipped into the water’s edge, verse 16, “the waters which came down from upstream stood still, and rose in a heap very far away at Adam, the city that is beside Zaretan. So the waters that went down into the Sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, failed, and were cut off; and the people crossed over opposite Jericho.” The waters at Adam backed up. Adam was sixteen miles north of the crossing point, and twenty miles north of the outlet into the Dead Sea. There the banks of the river rise forty feet. God supernaturally dammed up the Jordan River.

Verse 17 “Then the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan; and all Israel crossed over on dry ground, until all the people had crossed completely over the Jordan.” But note verse 15, the miracle does not occur until the priests who carry the Ark step into the water. It looked like they would swim, but rather than swim the miracle occurred when they brought *Him* to the water! It’s always *Him* that prevents a swim.

God wants us to learn to take steps of faith. As with all His miracles, the damming of the Jordan was preceded by a step of faith... Perhaps today you’re facing turbulent situations. You feel overwhelmed. God can do wonders, but you have to bring *Him* to the swim. *Do you have faith to step into the river with God?*

Chapter 4 is about **the Stones**. Not *the Rolling Stones* or *getting stoned*, but about **memorial stones**. It begins after the second generation experiences their turning point moment by crossing the river bed on dry ground... At this point, Israel is preparing to cross over. God tells Joshua to choose twelve men, one from each tribe, to take a stone from the river, back to the camp.

Verse 7 tells us why, “And these stones shall be for a memorial to the children of Israel forever.” There will be two memorials *or piles of stones*. Two monuments that will remind Israel of God’s rolling back of the river.

Verse 8, “And the children of Israel did so, just as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones from the midst of the Jordan, as the LORD had spoken to Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, and carried them over with them to the place where they lodged (or camped), and laid them down there.” That’s the first set of twelve stones.

“Then Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of the Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests who bore the ark of the covenant stood; and they are there to this day.” Joshua places twelve more stones at the water’s edge - the exact spot where the priests of Israel activated their faith and stepped into the river with the Ark. For decades it will serve as a reminder.

God’s miracle at the Jordan was a watershed event in the history of Israel. It solidified their identity as God’s people. It was the same miracle, but with new meaning. When Israel came to the Red Sea they were *slaves escaping their enemies*, but at the Jordan they were an *army determined to conquer their enemies*.

The cross of Jesus is likewise one miracle with two meanings... Crossing the Red Sea speaks of our salvation. It parallels the day I learned **Christ died for me...** But crossing the Jordan speaks of victory. It marks the day I learned **I died with Christ.** That I am not the same person I once was. I’m a new creation...

In Christ I have a new identity. I’m dead to my past, no longer a slave to sin, but a child of God. The power of His Spirit works in me to overcome my enemies. *Have you crossed the Jordan?* Have you memorialized the miracle Jesus worked in your life? There comes a time when we need to fully embrace that for which God has embraced us! Do you find your identity and your destiny in your relationship with Jesus - or are you still wandering in the wilderness trying to figure life out?

At the cross of Jesus *the Red Sea parts - our sin is forgiven, a prisoner escapes...* But at the same cross that prisoner becomes a prince - *the believer crosses the Jordan and his enemies cower* - for he or she now realizes they’re an overcomer! *Just because you’re saved and have passed through the Sea - doesn’t mean you’ve crossed the Jordan.* Do you see yourself a new person in Christ? Dead to sin and alive to God.

I’m going to say something you’ve never heard a pastor say, “You need to get stoned!” That’s right!

Here’s what I mean... You need to mentally and spiritually solidify your faith. Set up some memorial stones. Create in your mind a new identity in Christ. Make a *solid* commitment to see yourself new and different. No longer a slave to sin trying to get

free, but as an overcomer now learning to walk in victory. Christ died for you, but you're also now dead to sin in Christ.

In verse 10 the priests carrying the Ark stand in the middle of the riverbed until all the people cross over.

Remember 2-3 million Israelites crossed. If they all passed at the same spot it would've taken weeks. But the river was backed up to Adam (16 miles upstream). That means they could've crossed over a swath several miles wide, which would've turned it into hours.

After the last person had crossed the priests brought the Ark up out of the riverbed. Then the 2 1/5 tribes who'd taken their inheritance east of the Jordan, put on a military parade to show their preparedness - 40,000 men ready for battle marched into the plains of Jericho.

Verse 14, "On that day the LORD exalted Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they feared him, as they had feared Moses, all the days of his life." The miracle at the Jordan so closely resembled the parting of the Sea Israel realized God was with Joshua, as He'd been with Moses. The miracle validated Joshua's authority.

"Then the LORD spoke to Joshua, saying, 'Command the priests who bear the ark of the Testimony to come up from the Jordan.'" The second the soles of their feet touch the shore the dam broke. The river rushed southward, again flooding its banks.

Verse 19, "Now the people came up from the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month, and they camped in Gilgal on the east border of Jericho." They entered the land four days before Passover. "And those twelve stones which they took out of the Jordan, Joshua set up in Gilgal." As I said there were two memorials - one at the riverbed, and the other at Gilgal - or Israel's base of operation throughout the conquest of Canaan.

"Then he spoke to the children of Israel, saying: 'When your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, 'What are these stones?' 'then you shall let your children know, saying, 'Israel crossed over this Jordan on dry land'; for the LORD your God dried up the waters of the Jordan before you until you had crossed over, as the LORD your God did to the Red Sea, which He dried up before us until we had crossed over, that all the peoples of the earth may know the hand of the LORD, that it is mighty, that you may fear the LORD your God forever.'" Two watershed events defined the birth of the nation... The parting of the Red Sea liberated them from slavery. The rolling back of the Jordan River opened the door to God's blessing. At the Sea the Hebrews said good-bye to *their past*. At the River they embraced *God's purpose for*

their future.

*And two watershed realizations mark the life of every Christian. A Red Sea parting occurs when I believe *Jesus died for me*. I pass from slavery to freedom. But a Jordan River experience happens when I believe *I died with Christ*. When I begin to see myself as a new creation, and embrace a new identity as a child of God. *God brings us out to bring us into something better.**

The Red Sea speaks of salvation, but the Jordan River speaks of victory! I cross the Jordan when I embrace my birthright. I'm not just free from sin's guilt, but I'm free from sin's power as well. As a child of God I'm heir to His blessing - an overcomer by His Spirit!

Victory is what the book of Joshua is about. It's more than a military thriller, *it's our guide to a triumphant life!*