



“This is the Story...”

Written by Talashia Keim Yoder and Daniel Yoder. Artwork by Christa and Jonathan Reuel.
Song lyrics and music by Jonathan Reuel.

Week 12: When the Walls Come Down

Joshua 3-4, 6:1-21

Intro Video: https://youtu.be/2okDp_rCEjs

Review the big story: God created the cosmos and humans and called it all good. We were created to live in harmony, but sometimes we miss the mark. Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, and all of humanity missed the mark, and they had to live with the consequences, but God stuck with them and continued to love them. Then God called a family, beginning with Abraham and Sarah, to be in a covenant relationship with God. God’s work continued with three more generations from this family. Like the humans before them, they often missed the mark, but God was faithful. When the people became slaves in Egypt, God raised up Moses to be their leader. God performed many signs and wonders, and delivered them from slavery. In the wilderness, they learned to be a people of God, trusting in God’s provision, living out God’s commandments, and wrestling with the law in shalom community. As they prepared to go into the promised land, they were given the *shema*, words of love to keep with their whole beings.

- **Key verses:** Joshua 3:5; Joshua 4:21-22; Joshua 6:16

Tell the story: An entire generation has passed since the people were delivered from slavery and turned their eyes to the promised land. Now this new generation, who learned to be a people of God in the wilderness, are ready to lead the way to the promised land. Joshua takes Moses’ place as leader. First, they cross the Jordan, a big and mighty river that clears a path for them to pass through. They build a monument of stones to help them tell the story. Then they follow careful instructions to march around Jericho, to blow trumpets and to shout, and to wait for God to level the city walls.

- Read Joshua 3-4, 6:1-21
- Read pages 72-75 in the *Shine On* story Bible

Prime the pump:

- **Things to notice:**
 - What does this story of crossing the Jordan remind you of? Notice the similarities and differences of this story with the last time the people passed through a river on dry ground.
 - Read the journey of the stones in Joshua 4 carefully. Notice why this ritual is required of the people. There is such power in what happens with the stones in this story, both in the ritual itself and in the conversations it will evoke later! This also might be the time to start keeping track of all the times the number 12 comes up in the biblical story.
 - Another number to track is seven. Notice in Joshua 6:4 how many times the word seven is used! Where else have you heard the number seven in the big story so far?
- **Background information:**
 - The Hebrew word translated as “cross(ing/ed) over,” *avar*, shows up eight times in chapter 3. This is both a literal and symbolic crossing over for the people. Find all the “cross over” references.
 - This is the first time we’re really talking about the Ark of the Covenant in this series. The Ark is a big, big deal! The stone tablets of the law (which you may know as the 10 Commandments) are housed in it. It has great significance in the people of God, and is seen as sacred and powerful.

- Jericho is called a “city” in Joshua 6:3. It’s helpful for our modern ears to know that the city probably had at most a couple thousand residents. It was very common for a city to be surrounded by walls to protect the inhabitants.
- Digging into historicity in this story can be a challenge. Archaeological evidence of the ancient city at the described site would point to the story not being “historically accurate.” But maybe that is not the point. Perhaps the important story here is that God called up the leader, God inspired the plans, and the first Israelite town in the promised land happens through a miraculous act of God, not through human power. God is the primary actor. That is what is important.
- **Conversation starters:**
 - “What do these stones mean?” What are the “stones” in your household that prompt you to tell your formative stories?
 - In this story, Joshua really comes into his role of leader of the people (see Joshua 3:7 and 4:14). It’s a leadership transition, from Moses to Joshua. If this angle intrigues you, go back and read more about Joshua, beginning with the 12 spies in Numbers 13, then more in the beginning of the book of Joshua.
 - This is a squirmy story. We were tempted to end this recommended reading with Joshua 6:20 instead of verse 21. It is triumphalist, perhaps pointing toward occupation or colonization. Through today’s lens, Joshua 6 is hard to read. Wrestle with that.

Microsong: “When the Walls Come Down:” (Listen: <https://youtu.be/Yvk-s3EGspc>)

Cross over Jordan, riverbed dry. Pile twelve stones so the kids ask why. Thirteen circuits with trumpets then a shout... Keep nothing for yourself when the walls come down.

Sing the big song: (Listen: <https://youtu.be/RVdXw6uRpF4>)

This is the story of how it all began. God made matter, and chaos shattered.

Eve and Adam, they tried to hide. The world got violent and God replied with a mark and flood
and a rainbow sign, God’s love written on skin and sky,

And then God called a family to be a blessing to the earth, ahhhhhh

A mother and her favorite son wrestle for the blessing, another son becomes a slave, the land is
saved from famine.

God’s family grows. Egypt oppresses. They groan to God and God sends Moses.

Ten strange signs say “Please release them!” By the sea God saves them. Ahhhhhhh

The people complain and God rains bread. Daily food and ten new rules.

Five sisters come and ask for land. God says, “Yes, amend the law!”

*Moses says, “In your new life across the Jordan, love God with your whole heart and with all your
being, and your strength, now listen: God is One, only God! God is One, only God!”*

Cross over Jordan, stories and stones. Circles and shouts and the walls come down.

God loves every one of us, it’s true, and God loves the universe.

Go do your household project!



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Week 13: The Land Has Rest

Judges 2:16-23, 4:4-24

Intro Video: <https://youtu.be/Ft6sZPjIA4I>

Review the big story: God created the cosmos and humans and called it all good. We were created to live in harmony, but sometimes we miss the mark. Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, and all of humanity missed the mark, and they had to live with the consequences, but God stuck with them and continued to love them. Then God called a family, beginning with Abraham and Sarah, to be in a covenant relationship with God. God’s work continued with three more generations from this family. Like the humans before them, they often missed the mark, but God was faithful. When the people became slaves in Egypt, God raised up Moses to be their leader. God performed many signs and wonders, and delivered them from slavery. In the wilderness, they learned to be a people of God, trusting in God’s provision, living out God’s commandments, and wrestling with the law in shalom community. As they prepared to go into the promised land, they were given the *shema*, words of love to keep with their whole beings. God gives the people a new leader, Joshua, and through miraculous works brings the people through the Jordan River and into the promised land.

- **Key verses:** Judges 2:16-19; Judges 4:5; Judges 4:9

Tell the story: Now the people are in a new place, and they have to learn again how to be a people of God. They keep forgetting those words from the Shema, and that gets them in trouble. So God raises up judges to deliver them. Each time God raises up a judge, the people do better...until the judge dies. Then they miss the mark again, and again God has to raise up a judge. Deborah was one of those judges. When one of the tribal leaders didn’t want to go do what he was supposed to do, Deborah called him out on it, then went with him. But he wasn’t the one that had glory at the end of the day. The glory went to Jael, a woman who used her wits to help her people.

- Read Judges 2:16-23; 4:4-24

Prime the pump:

- **Things to notice:**
 - Remember back in Exodus 1-4, when women played subversive roles in continuing the story of the people of God? They’re back at it in this story. Read Judges 4:4-24 and notice the times that the story deviates from what you would expect.
 - This is a rather gruesome story. But it also has an element of humor to it. Picture the whole thing as a clown skit, and catch the absurdities.
 - Consider also reading chapter 5, which is the story song that Deborah and Barak sang. We aren’t the first ones to use a song to tell a story!
- **Background information:**
 - The Hebrew word *shofet* translated as “judge” can mean a judicial authority or a leader/chieftan. Leader/chieftan is actually a more accurate term for many of the judges in the book of Judges. But Deborah seems to have functioned as both.
 - The book of Judges tells us the stories of what scholars call the “judges cycle.” The first part of this week’s passage very clearly explains what that cycle was. This whole book is full of gruesome stories about the people’s disobedience. If you want to dig into the messiness of the people of God, start reading through Judges.

- With the way 4:6 is interpreted in most Bibles, it would seem that Deborah is instructing Barak. But according to Robert Alter, it is more accurate to translate it, “Has not the LORD God of Israel charged you...” meaning that he knew already what he was supposed to do but wasn’t doing it. How does that change this reading?
- **Conversation starters:**
 - This is an uncomfortable story. Does God want this violent thing to happen? Is what Jael did good? Be okay with not having on the answers. Acknowledge all the different things you feel as you read this story. Do you want to cheer for these women? Are you grossed out? Do you squirm? Wrestle with it.
 - This whole judges cycle is yet one more story of God sticking with humanity. If this resonates with you, maybe you want to track the ways God has stuck with humans throughout this story.

Microsong: “The Land Has Rest” (Listen: <https://youtu.be/WORm73GuA6s>)

God’s family turns away from God. Nine hundred iron chariots control the land until the people groan to God again.
 God sends a judge named Deborah who leads the people into battle. When the bloodsheds over then the land has rest.
 For forty years, forty years.

Sing the big song: (Listen: <https://youtu.be/Mli9N-ITjTg>)

This is the story of how it all began. God made matter, and chaos shattered.
 Eve and Adam, they tried to hide. The world got violent and God replied with a mark and flood
 and a rainbow sign, God’s love written on skin and sky,
And then God called a family to be a blessing to the earth, ahhhhhh
 A mother and her favorite son wrestle for the blessing, another son becomes a slave, the land is
 saved from famine.
 God’s family grows. Egypt oppresses. They groan to God and God sends Moses.
Ten strange signs say “Please release them!” By the sea God saves them. Ahhhhhhh
 The people complain and God rains bread. Daily food and ten new rules.
 Five sisters come and ask for land. God says, “Yes, amend the law!”
*Moses says, “In your new life across the Jordan, love God with your whole heart and with all your
 being, and your strength, now listen: God is One, only God! God is One, only God!”*
 Cross over Jordan, stories and stones. Circuits and shouts and the walls come down.
 God sends judges like Deborah and the land has rest.
God loves every one of us, it’s true, and God loves the universe.

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Week 14: The Unexpected Gift of Steadfast Love

Ruth

Intro Video: <https://youtu.be/nRflqKtW1es>

Review the big story: God created the cosmos and humans and called it all good. We were created to live in harmony, but sometimes we miss the mark. Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, and all of humanity missed the mark, and they had to live with the consequences, but God stuck with them and continued to love them. Then God called a family, beginning with Abraham and Sarah, to be in a covenant relationship with God. God’s work continued with three more generations from this family. Like the humans before them, they often missed the mark, but God was faithful. When the people became slaves in Egypt, God raised up Moses to be their leader. God performed many signs and wonders, and delivered them from slavery. In the wilderness, they learned to be a people of God, trusting in God’s provision, living out God’s commandments, and wrestling with the law in shalom community. As they prepared to go into the promised land, they were given the *shema*, words of love to keep with their whole beings. God gives the people a new leader, Joshua, and through miraculous works brings the people through the Jordan River and into the promised land. Once there, they had to learn again how to be God’s people. They missed the mark a lot, and God sent judges like Deborah to guide and lead them.

- **Key verses:** Ruth 1:16-17; Ruth 4:14-15

Tell the story: A famine came to Judah, and Elimelech and Naomi took their two sons to a different country, Moab, to find food. Their sons married Moabite women. Eventually, Elimelech and the two sons died, so Naomi got ready to return to Judah. Her daughter-in-law, Ruth, was determined to go with her, so the two of them, remnants of the family, traveled to Judah. These two women now need to figure out how to survive, and because of some of the same laws that the daughters of Zelophehad struggled with, Naomi and Ruth have to get creative. The story ends happily, with Ruth marrying a kinsman and their ancestral land being redeemed for their descendants. Ruth is the great-grandmother of King David.

- Read Ruth 1-4
- Read pages 79 in the *Shine On* story Bible

Prime the pump:

- **Things to notice:**
 - Notice the emotions of this story. It is such a compelling story. Why do we still identify with it today?
 - The adoption theme re-emerges here. Ruth’s speech in Ruth 1:16-17 has often been used as wedding scripture, but we see here that it is bigger than romantic love.
- **Background information:**
 - There is a recurring theme of “steadfast love” in this story. The Hebrew word is *hesed*, and it shows up three times (in 1:8, 2:20, and 3:10). It is interpreted in words like “kindness” and “loyalty.” Elsewhere in the Bible, it is interpreted as “steadfast love” or “loving kindness.” How is this a story of *hesed*?
 - “Feet” is a euphemism for genitals. Now read Ruth 3.
 - There are several parts of this story that seem strange without explanation. For example, Naomi’s words in Ruth 1:11 are talking about Levirate marriage (if a man died, his brother was to marry his widow so that she would be protected and the man would have someone

to inherit). Ruth 4:17 also makes reference to a similar practice. If you're intrigued, look it up on [wikipedia](#), or look more specifically for customs like this in the Old Testament.

- **Conversation starters:**

- Ruth is a Moabite. She is a foreigner, forbidden from many customs. Yet she is in the line of David, the messianic line - the line of Jesus. She is held up in rabbinic tradition as an example of virtue. Think about this in the broader story. How does God work through outsiders, even today?
- This is also a story of immigration. Read it with that lens.

Microsong: "The Unexpected Gift of Steadfast Love" (Listen: <https://youtu.be/Lpmg330IQhI>)

In the days of the judges another famine comes

Naomi and her family leave and settle far from home

Naomi's sons and husband die but Ruth will not leave her. God restores her property and keeps her name alive.

Ruth's worth more to her than seven sons; the unexpected gift of steadfast love.

Ruth's worth more to her than seven sons; the unexpected gift of steadfast love.

Sing the big song: (Listen: <https://youtu.be/s8kwtEtWIk>)

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Five sisters come and ask for land. God says, "Yes, amend the law!"

Moses says, "In your new life across the Jordan, love God with your whole heart and with all your being, and your strength, now listen: God is One, only God! God is One, only God!"

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Week 15: God Speaks to a Child

1 Samuel 3

Intro Video: <https://youtu.be/l1tblxFZTQ8>

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- **Key verses:** 1 Samuel 3:10; 1 Samuel 3:19

Tell the story: A woman named Hannah had a son named Samuel, whom she had promised to God for service. Young Samuel became a servant to Eli, the chief priest, whose sons were rebellious and not fit to carry on Eli’s priestly line. When Samuel was still a child, God called out to him during the night and delivered a message for Eli through him. This was the beginning of Samuel’s calling. Samuel marks the shift from priestly authority to prophetic authority. And when the people demand a king, he will be the mitigator, the prophet who negotiates between God and the people and who anoints the first kings.

- Read 1 Samuel 3
- Read page 83 in the *Shine On* story Bible

Prime the pump:

- **Things to notice:**
 - Vision and seeing are major themes in this story. Read it and notice it both in the literal sense and in the metaphoric sense.
 - Notice what Eli calls Samuel in verse six. What does this tell us about Eli and Samuel’s relationship? How do you think Samuel felt about delivering the message he had received to Eli? Imagine that scene.
- **Background information:**
 - Verse 3 says that the lamp of God had not yet gone out. This refers to the sanctuary lamp which burned throughout the night, so it’s from this reference that we infer the story happens at night.
 - If you would like to know what God is referring to in 1 Samuel 3:12-13, look back at 1 Samuel 2.

- **Conversation starters:**

- Read verse seven. This story is Samuel's first awakening as a prophet. Talk about your own moments of awakening - or your yearning for them.
- Notice that Samuel's first prophecy isn't exactly a joyful one. This will be the case for many of his prophecies. He says yes to a hard life here. Think about this alongside many of the things we are often told about saying yes to God.

Microsong: "God Speaks to a Child" (Listen: <https://youtu.be/7KjA3iR6pig>)

Corruption in the temple, God speaks to a child, Samuel. As he grows the people listen when this prophet speaks.

Sing the big song: (Listen: <https://youtu.be/01fK6xR3KMc>)

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