

engage

Want to explore God's incredible word? Want the lowdown on tricky Christian conversation topics? Want to know God better and be challenged in the way you live for Him? If the answer's "Yes" to any of those questions, we've got loads of treats in store for you in issue 9 of **engage**

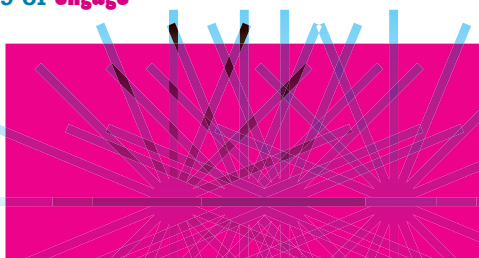
* **DAILY READINGS** Each day's page throws you into the Bible, to get you handling, questioning and exploring God's message to you — encouraging you to act on it and talk to God more in prayer.

THIS ISSUE: Fight the good fight with **Joshua**; Stand up for Jesus in **Acts**; stop drifting away in **Hebrews**; prepare for disaster with **Joel**; and take heart with some great **Psalms**.

* **TAKE IT FURTHER** If you're hungry for more at the end of an **engage** page, turn to the **Take it further** section to dig deeper.

* **REAL LIVES** True stories, revealing God at work in people's lives. This time — **we travel to Haiti with doc Pip Fox**.

* **TRICKY** tackles those mind-bendingly tricky questions that confuse us all, as well as questions our friends bombard us with. This time: **Doesn't religion just lead to wars and hate?**



* **ESSENTIAL** Articles on the basics we really need to know about God, the Bible and Christianity. This issue, we look at what the Bible says about **Jesus, the man**.

* **STUFF** Articles on stuff relevant to the lives of young Christians. This issue: **Sex — what's the big deal?**

* **TOOLBOX** is full of tools to help you understand the Bible. This issue we concentrate on **Bible words that trip us up**.

All of us who work on engage are passionate to see the Bible at work in people's lives. Do you want God's word to have an impact on your life? Then open your Bible, and start on the first engage study right now...

HOW TO USE **engage**

- 1 Set a time you can read the Bible every day
- 2 Find a place where you can be quiet and think
- 3 Grab your Bible, pen and a notebook
- 4 Ask God to help you understand what you read
- 5 Read the day's verses with **engage**, taking time to think about it
- 6 Pray about what you've read

BIBLE STUFF

We use the NIV Bible version, so you might find it's the best one to use with **engage**. If the notes say "**Read Luke 6 v 1–5**", look up Luke in the contents page at the front of your Bible. It'll tell you which page Luke starts on. Find chapter 6 of Luke, and then verse 1 of chapter 6 (the verse numbers are the tiny ones). Then start reading. Simple.

In this issue...

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ENGAGE WARRIORS

Word weaponry: Martin Cole Carl Laferton Cassie Martin
Jim Overton Helen Thorne

Devastating design: Steve Devane

Powerful proof-reading Anne Woodcock Nicole Carter

Extreme editing: Martin Cole (martin@thegoodbook.co.uk)

Joshua

Invade and conquer

After years of slavery in Egypt and forty years in the desert, the Israelites were finally going to enter the promised land of Canaan. The problem was that Canaan wasn't empty. It was full of people who were enemies of God and His people. They wouldn't give up their land without a fight.

ATTACK!

At the end of Deuteronomy, the Israelites were camped on the east side of the river Jordan. God wanted His people to conquer the land on the west of the river and He appointed Joshua to lead them into battle. Would God keep His promise to give His people this land flowing with milk and honey?

DEJA VU

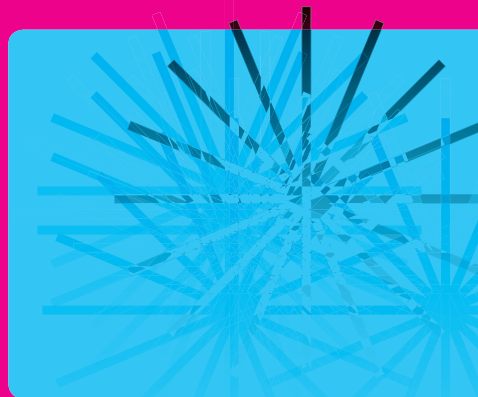
If this all sounds a little familiar, it's because the Israelites had reached this point before. But they hadn't trusted God to give them victory and success in Canaan. So He punished them by

making them wait a further 40 years in the desert until that disobedient generation had all died out. All except faithful Joshua and Caleb.

SECOND CHANCE

Now God's people were back with a second opportunity. Would they trust God this time and go in to claim the land? For Christians, this book teaches us loads about God and His relationship with His people. He has made great promises in the Bible — will we trust and obey Him?

Let battle commence...





1

Promising start

Ready for a history lesson? What do you mean “No”?
Give us a chance! Joshua is the sixth book in the Bible and continues the history of God's people, the Israelites.
Time for a recap.

Read Genesis 12 v 1-3

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

What promises did God make to Abram?

Read Genesis 50 v 20-25

Which of the promises had come true by the end of Genesis?

What was Joseph confident about? (v24)

God promised Abram *people, land and blessing*. His family would become a great nation, with their own country to live in, and they would be a blessing to everyone. By the end of Genesis, only the first promise had come true.

In **Exodus**, God rescued His people from terrible slavery in Egypt by opening up the Red Sea as a national escape route. God then met their leader Moses on Mount Sinai and gave them His law (the Ten Commandments in **Deuteronomy**

and other stuff in **Leviticus**) so they knew how to live as God's people in the land He would give them.

Disastrously, the people rebelled and chose not to go into Canaan. That's in **Numbers**. They were punished by God. 40 years on, after Moses had died, what had happened to the promises?

Read Joshua 1 v 1-5

How did God encourage Joshua?

How should it encourage us too?

God gave Joshua a tough task — leading His people into battle. But the Lord promised to be with them, giving them victory and a new home.

PRAY ABOUT IT

Thank God for keeping His promises made years ago. Ask Him to speak to you through the book of Joshua.

TAKE IT FURTHER

More on God's promises — page 109.



2

Following orders

**“Pull yourself together!” “Don’t be sad; cheer up.”
Now and then concerned friends tell us what to do.
Sometimes they’re worth listening to; sometimes they’re
not. But God’s orders must always be taken seriously.**

Read Joshua 1 v 6–9

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

- ▶ *What does God tell Moses to do? (v6, v7, v9)*
- ▶ *Why was this important? (v6)*
- ▶ *What was the key to success? (v7–8)*

The Israelites had a huge task ahead of them — conquering Canaan. They had to be brave and strong. God gave them a leader, Joshua, and a book to guide them. Success relied on obeying God’s word. They could be courageous in such a terrifying situation because God would always be with them (v9). And He promised to make them successful (v8).

These verses are still important to believers now. God calls us to be brave as we share our faith. He’s always with us and we now have the whole Bible to teach us and guide us. One day we’ll have amazing success and prosperity — eternal life with God!

Read verses 10–18

Two and a half of the twelve Israelite tribes would live on the other side of the river Jordan from Canaan.

- ▶ *But what did Joshua expect of them? (v14–15)*
- ▶ *How did they respond? (v16)*

GET ON WITH IT

- ▶ *Through the Holy Spirit, God is always with His people — do you remember that?*
- ▶ *God’s word, the Bible, should be our guide — are you reading it enough?*
- ▶ *It’s full of His promises — are you relying on them?*
- ▶ *It records His commands too — are you obeying them?*

THE BOTTOM LINE

Be strong and courageous.
God is always with His people.

→ TAKE IT FURTHER

Be brave and turn to page 109.



3

Faith in strange places

I spy with my little eye something beginning with J. And R. In this section of his book, Joshua sends spies to check out the land over the river. Their risky expedition would have extraordinary twists to it...

Read Joshua 2 v 1–11

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

- ▷ *Who surprisingly helped God's spies? (v1)*
- ▷ *What had she heard about the Lord? (v9–10)*

Jericho was the first place the Israelites would have to defeat on their way into the promised land. God often uses the least likely people to serve Him in big ways. This time it was Rahab the prostitute. She'd heard all about God and how He'd rescued the Israelites and destroyed their enemies. She feared the Lord and pleaded for her life to be spared...

Read verses 12–24

- ▷ *What deal was struck? (v14)*
- ▷ *What was Rahab told to do?*
- ▷ *What did the spies report? (v24)*

God had chosen the Israelites to be

His people. They were to respond with faith — trusting His promises. But God's plan was for the whole world. Incredibly, here was an outsider (a non-Israelite, a prostitute too) who turned to God for rescue.

The New Testament shows how Jesus came to rescue sinful people whatever their background or history. Brilliant news. And Jesus wants us to trust Him completely.

PRAY ABOUT IT

Are you a Christian? Thank God for making you one of His people. And think (then pray about) what it will mean to trust Him... in all your decision making; in difficult situations; in the face of doubt or abuse; with everything.

THE BOTTOM LINE

God's rescue is available to everyone.

→ TAKE IT FURTHER

I spy with my little eye something beginning with TIF... on page 109.



4

Water proof

Joshua's spies reported that people in Jericho were shaking in their boots about the Israelites' God. Time to invade! Oh, hold on, there's a huge, rushing river in the way.

Read Joshua 3 v 1–6

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

What three instructions did Joshua give? (v3–5)

The *ark of the covenant* was a portable throne/chest which contained the Ten Commandments. It was a symbol of God's presence with His people — the Lord was leading the way. And it reminded the Israelites of the covenant promises God had made. They were God's rescued people, who must depend on His promises, His word. They had to consecrate themselves (v5) — special ceremonial washing to make them clean enough for God's presence.

Read verses 7–17

- What did Joshua remind them about God? (v10, v13)*
- What would God do for them? (v10)*
- What proof of God's greatness did they witness? (v15–17)*

In the Old Testament, the Israelites seemed to regularly forget how powerful their God was. Here was another miraculous reminder. Just as He had brought the previous generation through the Red Sea, God showed them by this similar miracle that He'd really be with them. He would give them victory in Canaan.

GET ON WITH IT

Through the Holy Spirit, God is always with His people today too. They can still rely on His promises, knowing He's the living God (v10); the Lord of all the earth (v13).

Find Deuteronomy 10 v 14. Make a poster of it or memorise it.

PRAY ABOUT IT

Our God is the God of the whole earth. Praise and thank Him. And bring your requests to Him, knowing nothing is impossible for God.

TAKE IT FURTHER

More miraculous signs — page 109.



5

Set in stone

Yesterday we zoomed through the story of God holding back the river Jordan so the Israelites could cross into the promised land. Today we get a slo-mo replay and a big reminder.

Read Joshua 4 v 1–18

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

- ▶ *Who had to do what?*
- ▶ *Why? (v6–7)*
- ▶ *What did God do for Joshua? (v14)*
- ▶ *Then what happened? (v18)*

Read verses 19–24

- ▶ *What great rescue were they reminded of? (v23)*
- ▶ *How would other nations react to news of this miracle? (v24)*
- ▶ *And how should God's people react? (v24b)*

God's bunch of people had been bullied slaves in Egypt and He'd rescued them by parting the Red Sea. They then rejected His rule so He sent them into the desert. Yet He went with them and gave them food out of nowhere. Now, at the Jordan, He'd done the miraculous again. The Israelites were now in the land God had promised to give them.

God had done so much for them, and would continue to lead them, care for them and fight for them. His people were expected to trust Him and tell others about all He'd done. They were also to fear Him (v24) — respect, trust and obey Him fully.

The Israelites looked at these twelve stones to remind them of God's greatness. We look back to the cross of Jesus to see God's greatest rescue of all. It's the supreme reminder of God's greatness, love and care for us. And of the fact He's always with us.

PRAY ABOUT IT

If you're thankful for God's great acts, especially the cross, tell Him. Ask Him to help your lifestyle match your words.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Remember God's great rescue. Fear the Lord.

TAKE IT FURTHER

Page 110 is a stone's throw away.



6

Snip snip hooray!

God's people were now in the land He'd promised them. Their punishment was over at last. Time to start again with God.

Read Joshua 5 v 1–3

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

- What was great news for God's people? (v1)*
- What was eye-watering news for them? (v2)*

Once they had arrived in the promised land God ordered Joshua to have all the males circumcised (having the foreskin cut off the penis). Why did Joshua need to do that???

Read verses 4–8

Centuries before, in Abraham's time, God wanted the Israelites to be circumcised. Why? As a sign of being God's people. Like wearing a badge which said: "I'm living under God's care with His people!" It was actually a big privilege. But it wasn't a ticket to heaven. Circumcised or not, you still had to trust God.

- Why hadn't there been circumcision for 40 years? (v6)*

No trust in God, no circumcision. Now the punishment was over, God's people could start again. By being circumcised, they were promising to trust the God who'd rescued them.

God's people were to be different. These days, Christians don't need circumcision to mark them out as belonging to God. The Bible talks about "circumcision of the heart" (Jeremiah 4 v 4). Our attitude to God is what really counts. Living God's way marks us out as different.

THINK IT THROUGH

- Are you any different from non-Christians you know?*
- What marks you out as different and loyal to God?*
- How does your attitude to God need to change?*

Talk your answers over with the Lord honestly.

TAKE IT FURTHER

Tuck into some food on page 110.



7

Surround sound

Ever been surprised by someone’s sudden appearance? An unwanted teacher or boss silently appearing at your shoulder. Bumping into a friend in the unlikeliest place. Well, Joshua is about to have the shock of his life...

Read Joshua 5 v 13 – 6 v 5

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

- ▶ *Who visited Joshua?*
- ▶ *What was Joshua’s right response? (5 v 14–15)*
- ▶ *What did God promise Joshua? (6 v 2)*
- ▶ *How would it be achieved? (v3–5)*

What an incredible encouragement to know that God’s army was fighting on his side! The instructions were weird but that wasn’t the point. What really mattered was that Joshua obeyed God and gave Him the respect He deserved (5 v 14–15).

Read Joshua 6 v 6–14

- ▶ *Remember what the ark was a symbol of? (See day 4)*
- ▶ *So what did marching with the ark show?*

Joshua and the Israelites followed God’s unusual instructions. How could this possibly defeat a fortified city? We’ll find out tomorrow.

Back in Joshua 1 v 9, God said: *“Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”*

GET ON WITH IT

- ▶ *How can you show more respect to the Lord?*
- ▶ *In what ways do you need to be more obedient to God?*
- ▶ *What do you need to be courageous about?*
- ▶ *How will it help to remember that God is with you?*

PRAY ABOUT IT

Spend 5 minutes talking over your answers with the Lord. Thank Him that He’s fighting on the side of His people and is always with them.

THE BOTTOM LINE

God is fighting for His people.

→ TAKE IT FURTHER

Ark and ride — page 110.



8

Wall fall down

God commanded the Israelites to march around Jericho with His ark, blowing their trumpets. They did this once a day for six straight days. On day seven there was a noisy and devastating change of routine.

Read Joshua 6 v 15–21

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

- What special instructions were the attackers given? (v18)*
- What was the outcome of this bizarre battle plan? (v20)*

The city was devoted to the Lord — it was up to God what He did with it. Some bits were to be kept (v19), while the rest of Jericho was to be wiped out (v21).

Read verses 22–27

- Remember Rahab? What happened to her and her family?*
- What happened to everyone and everything else? (v21, v24)*
- What happened to Joshua? (v27)*

God was in complete control. He rightly punished the people of Jericho who refused to live His way. But He rescued Rahab, who turned to Him.

God expected total allegiance and trust from His people. And He wanted them to be pure. That's why the ungodly people of Jericho had to be wiped out — so God's people would not be tempted by them to follow other gods.

We live after Jesus came. The situation has changed but God hasn't. On the cross, Jesus defeated our worst and most fearsome enemy, death. The Bible warns us that people will ridicule Jesus and the cross. They'll think it's weird. Impossible. But God says it's His way of rescue, so we're to trust Him, obey His commands and kick out the wrong things in our lives.

PRAY ABOUT IT

Pray for people you know who reject God and are headed for destruction. Plead with God to rescue them, as He did Rahab.

TAKE IT FURTHER

More on God's judgment on p110.



9

Achan pain

Israelites 1 Jericho 0. Well, God 1 Jericho 0. Would His people now trust Him? Or would they take matters into their own hands rather than let God rule in His way? If they did, the consequences would be fierce.

Read Joshua 7 v 1–9

ENGAGE YOUR BRAIN

What had Achan done wrong? (See Joshua 6 v 18–19)

How did God punish His disobedient people? (3–5)

Who did Joshua blame? (v7)

Joshua couldn't work out what had gone wrong so quickly after the magnificent victory at Jericho. Why would God allow the Israelites to be beaten up by a small town? Joshua would soon find out...

Read verses 10–15

What was the reason for the reason for the defeat of Ai? (v11)

What would happen if they didn't take urgent action? (v12)

The Israelites had broken their covenant agreement with God. Unless the culprit was found and put to

death, God would leave His people.

Read verses 16–26

How do you feel about this tragic story?

Was the punishment deserved?

God couldn't just forgive and forget as if nothing had happened. He hates sin. One day He will judge finally. And it's only the death of Jesus that can satisfy God's anger, and rescue us from God's punishment.

PRAY ABOUT IT

Time to talk honestly with God. What do you need to confess Him? What do you need to ask Him? What do you need to tell Him? What will you thank Him for?

THE BOTTOM LINE

God hates sin and will punish it.

TAKE IT FURTHER

More on this tricky topic on page 111.