

## “As for Me and My Household”

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Text: Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-25

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Good morning everyone. You are going to need something more than your ears this morning. You are going to need a pencil, a pen, a crayon, or some kind of writing utensil. Now, on the front of your bulletin there is a lot of white space. You're going to need that this morning, as well. I'm going to ask you five questions. We're going to take a little survey today. Question number one, and mark it thus, because when we talk about them a little later, I'm going to do them out of order. The first question is “Do you consider yourself to be an independent person?” Yes or no. Ready for question number two? “Do you have a relationship in your life that you consider a priority?” Yes or no. If you do, write the name of that person down. If you have more than one, you can write them all. Question three: “Are you a planner or a last minute reactor?” Now for those of you who have had to go back to the grocery store more than once in a month, have forgotten a meeting, or off the top of your head forget things for class or work, you might fall into the latter category although you want to fit in the former. Number four: “When, if ever, did you or have you made a decision to have a relationship with God?” For some people this is childhood, other people it's through marriage, some it's even later in life. Question number five: “Do you have a best friend?” If so, write their name down. Part B to this question, “How much time do you spend with them per week?”

You might be wondering what this has to do with Joshua. Mac (lay leader) so eloquently told us that the scripture we have this morning comes from the last moments of Joshua's life. It's Chapter 24 if you have your Bibles and want to open them back up that's wonderful, because I'm going to give you a brief overview. Because how can we start at the end of something, when we don't know the rest of it. If I asked you, “How many of you know the story of Joshua's life inside, down, up and out?”

Joshua was the son of Nun, who was Moses' assistant. Now Moses had been chosen by God to lead the people out of Isreal. Moses was a servant of God. Now, it's interesting to know that a servant is someone who takes the interest of another into account. They do not put out their own purposes, but they serve another's interests. That's a really clear distinction to make, because Moses was not serving his own interests but who's interests was Moses serving? God's. Well, Moses has been told that all of his descendants would see the promise land. So Moses, in those moments before, gets to see it. Gets to see the land where his descendants will live. But God tells him, the Lord says to him, “But you will not cross over there.” So they go up to the mount, and Moses sees all of the land but does not get to cross over, and dies. So who's going to take the people there? This is when the Lord appoints Joshua. And Moses lays his hands on him, blesses him with his spirit of wisdom and says, “You are to take the people there.” So that's what Joshua does. But what we understand is that Joshua was never given those first instructions. Those came to Moses, right? So without Moses' faithfulness, without Nun's faithfulness, Joshua would never have been in that situation. The Psalmist tells us teach our children and they will follow our paths. In this wilderness where they had wandered, Joshua had grown up watching people follow the Lord. Watching people listen to God's holy word and he learned that. But without those faithful people who had been servants to God, Joshua would not have had that example to follow. All throughout Joshua's life, he followed this example. Except for a couple of times...

We all know that we have those bumps in the road. It's about a journey. So a couple of times, for Joshua's household, there were a couple of people that did not follow. And that led the people of Israel into great peril. But it was Joshua who said, “We strayed off the path. We have to go back.” And he made corrections in order to be in full servant hood to God. See, Joshua knew three things. That you have to have a personal relationship with God. You're family has to have a relationship with one another and God. And the community with which you are in has to have a relationship with God. “As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.”

So if you want your household to serve the Lord, it has to start with you, and you have to be in relationship with God. So I want for us to go back to these questions. Number five: how many of you have a best friend? Now, this is the question I want to know: How many of you spend at least one hour a week, either face to face time or on the phone, with your friend? How many of you spend a half an hour a week with your friend? How many of you spend less than an hour a month talking to your best friend? Being in relationship with people means keeping those connections going. It's hard, because what do most of us spend our time doing? Working, watching t.v., taking care

of a household. Do I have any students here going to college? How much time do you spend going to class? Lots of time! For those of you who are retired, how do you spend your time? When we talk about being a servant, and serving and being in relationship with one another, I ask you these questions to say, "How much responsibility do you have in participating and building relationships with the closest friend you have?" Think about it.

Now, question number two: "Do you have a relationship in your life that you consider a priority?" Maybe it's not the best friend, but a relationship. The same questions apply. How much time do you give to that relationship? And is it quality time? I'm not asking about you saying, "By the way, did you pay the bill?" Or "Did you make sure to pick this up so we have it for the meeting?" But how much time do you spend talking to one another, about things that truly matter in your life. How vulnerable are you willing to be with that person? When was the last time that you risked sharing something with them?

Question number three: "Are you a planner or a last minute reactor?" All of you who are planners raise your hand. All of you who are last minute reactors raise your hand. Some of you should have both hands up! There are things in our lives that we plan for. And there are things in our lives that we respond to, right? All those unplanned things in our lives that pop up at the last minute, we have to respond to them. Because when your children come to you and say, "This is the form I forgot to have you sign and by the way we're going away for three days." and they don't have what they need. Or something comes in the mail, and something happens, you have to respond to that. A friend becomes ill. Something didn't go the way you planned, and THEN you have to react to it. Being in relationship with people, we have both. Planning and reacting.

Question number four. How many of you made the decision to have a relationship with God when you were under the age of twelve? For the rest of us, we either haven't made a decision yet, or it came later in our lives. Now, think about what caused you to make that decision. Was it teaching of some sort? Was it the sharing of other people? Did you go to a faith community? Did someone give you a piece of kindness that could never be repaid, and in that you saw the face of God? What was it?

Now the last question I think is really important. How many of us consider ourselves to be independent? I think being independent is a part of our nature, our culture. We're taught to stand on our own two feet, to work really hard, to have that pioneer spirit, to be someone, to be a leader, to stand up for what we believe in. We've heard this. It's a part of who we are. We want to make choices that are good for our lives. Or we want to be able to make choices that sometimes aren't so great for our lives. But we want to have that ability. We consider it a human right.

I've been reading this book. And I have to say it has truly changed my life about what it means to be independent and to be a servant. Now, I'm like many of you. I want to be able to shape my own destiny. We want to be able to make our own choices. We want to know what is good for us. We want to know how this all works. When someone says "What do you think?" or "How do you feel?", we want to be able to say "This is what I think and this is what is best for me." But what I've found through this reading and in being in community, is that sometimes being independent means that only my needs are taken care of. Sometimes, like what Joshua and Moses knew, is that when we serve what God intends, then everyone gets taken care of. And that's really hard, when I want something really bad. But if what I want is counterproductive to the whole community in which we live, what purpose does it serve? Being a servant means to live in relationship with God. I would venture to guess that most of us don't do it very well. How many of you wrote down that God is your best friend? How many of you wrote down that the relationship that you consider a priority is one with the Lord? And if you do, how much of your life do you give to that relationship? Is it only a morning prayer? Is it only a check written once a week? Is it only in certain decisions that are really important, that are "religious" ones that you ask God for God's help, but in the ones that you consider within your realm, you take the front seat?

To live the life of a servant is to give God everything. It's to be vulnerable enough to let another person decide what is best for us. It is to let the Holy of Holies lay out the path, and even in fear and trepidation, walk into what we know is best for God rather than ourselves. I don't know, if I had been Moses and given my whole life to God and been standing on that precipice, I might have argued with God, "I've led them all here, why can't I just walk over and have that reward?" For some of us it is but to toil, and lead, and never have the fruits of our labor. For some of us it is to risk greatly. To be stewards. It is to give our whole lives to God, to be in relationship with the Lord. You see, stewardship isn't about ten percent of your life. Ten percent of your finances. Ten percent or fifty percent. Stewardship is about living an entire life given to God. Trusting, faithfully, in fear and doubt, in joy and in blessing.

To let God determine what is right for us. Because you may be the example for someone who comes after you, to lead us to the promise land. Amen.