



Obedience, Identity and Encounter

Date: Sunday 26th September

Speaker: Andrew and Rosie McNeil

Key Verses: Joshua 5

Talk Summary:

We see in this story clear principles for how to progress in the life of faith.

1) Live from Obedience

Sometimes we're not called to do the obvious thing. But we're always called to obedience. The Israelites had neglected the things God had required while they were in the wilderness and before they could go into the land, they had to put things right. Specifically, circumcision and Passover.

Obedience is about "God first" mindset. (*Joshua Ch 1 v 7*) The decision to circumcise all the adult males would have incapacitated the army. They are vulnerable until they fully recover. Not logical, not what was obvious but it was God's way.

First part of our day. Fire up bible app or worship song and start the day centred on God.

First fruits. Salary, pension, any money you get. We have a God first stance. Of all the Lord has given us we give back in worship. Gifts to God.

First day of the week. Each Sunday - Consistently gather with God's people in worship.

God's commands are an expression of his love and for our benefit. Live a God first culture.

2) Live from Identity

God gave Abraham 3 promises *"I'll give you and your descendants **a land**. I'll make you **a father** of many nations, **all peoples on earth will be blessed through you**"* Genesis 12&17.

Circumcision is the sign of this covenant.

A. It symbolic. It's about **the cutting away of fleshly desires**. It's getting rid of ungodly appetites and attitudes – Sexual, financial, relational. Nothing should rule over you except God. All other desires, and habits take a backseat to serving God.

B. A physical and permanent reminder. Of the promise of future generations. They would remember several times a day

C. It's about a change of heart.

In Deuteronomy chapter 10, the Lord said "*circumcise, your hearts, and be stiff necked no more.*"

What God did with Abraham He's doing with them. What God said to Abraham He's restating to them.

Remember the promises – Remember who you are.

They then celebrate the Passover, to remember God's faithfulness. The big story of God's deliverance of His people from slavery in Egypt.

In Egypt the Israelites were slaves. God's saying you're not slaves, not unbelieving, not heart hearted. Your past doesn't dictate your future. That's a word for now.

The name of the place is called Gilgal: Gilgal means 'a rolling'. Let the shame, mistakes, failure, oppression roll off you. God was freeing them so they could move forward shame free.

We remember who God is and who we are. We remember our identity and his promises. Remember our identity – Who are we called to be as God's Church.

Who are we as Birmingham Vineyard – God's story how God see us?

We are called friends and called fruitful. Our shared story is of planting multiplication. Many people encountered Jesus Many leaders raised and released. Many Churches planted.

That's who God's made us to be. Coming out of the pandemic, He's reminding us of the promises over us. Of our primary purpose. We're blessed to be a blessing.

3) Live from Encounter

V 13-15 Joshua approaches this mysterious man with a drawn sword. Bible translators, scholars, believed that what we see here is **a theophany, an appearance** of the Lord in human form, in the Old Testament.

Specifically, an appearance of Jesus Christ, present with his people.

The question isn't is LORD on Joshua's side. The question is Joshua on the LORD's side.

How do we view our battles...how do we view the problems we are facing? Do we sometimes say 'God, will you help me with this' but really we want to do it our way... I think this is what Joshua was actually doing.

Public victories are the results of private encounters with the Lord

God often meets us in solitude when it's just you and God.

Encounters with God – It's about listening – being present - not talking. Joshua fell on his face before God.

He said "**What message does my Lord have for his servant?**"

What is Jesus saying to is as his Church? He's the captain – Lord the leader. Do we just ask God to bless what we've been doing? We need to ask Jesus "how are you leading us"?

We need to consecrate ourselves, get on our face in a personal encounter with Jesus – Listen to his voice.

We don't set the agenda. Jesus does. What is he saying? Go into all the world

Worship

Worship is not just singing, it is thanking God for who he is and what he has done and is lived out through a life of trusting obedience. Discussing this together is an act of worship.

(Small group worship resources can be found at bvc.so/sgworship)

- What are you thankful for this week?
- Where has God been at work in your life?
- When have you taken risks in faith and obedience this week?

If you have a time of singing you can skip the above questions but please do ask this question each week:

- What has God been speaking to you about this week? (*Go around the group quickly don't spend a long time on it*)

Discussion Questions (choose some which are most relevant to your group)

- 1) In what areas of your life do you feel God is calling you to obey Him? Are there any things He wants you to lean into in this new season? How can you put God first?
- 2) What promises do you feel God has spoken over your life that you've not yet seen happen? Pray into those things
- 3) What things do you feel God wants you to let go of so that your past doesn't define your future?
- 4) What battles are you fighting on your own that you would like God to show you His plan for? How can you find out what God's directions are for your battle?
- 5) In this season we are leaning into consecrating ourselves before God. What might that look like for you this week?

Witness - How would you share what you have learned with a non-church friend?

We want to be investing in authentic relationships with those who don't know Jesus yet and inviting them to anything where they might meet other Christians and Jesus. Pick one of the below each week:

- How would you share what you have learned with a non-church friend?
- What church events coming up would your friends appreciate an invitation to?