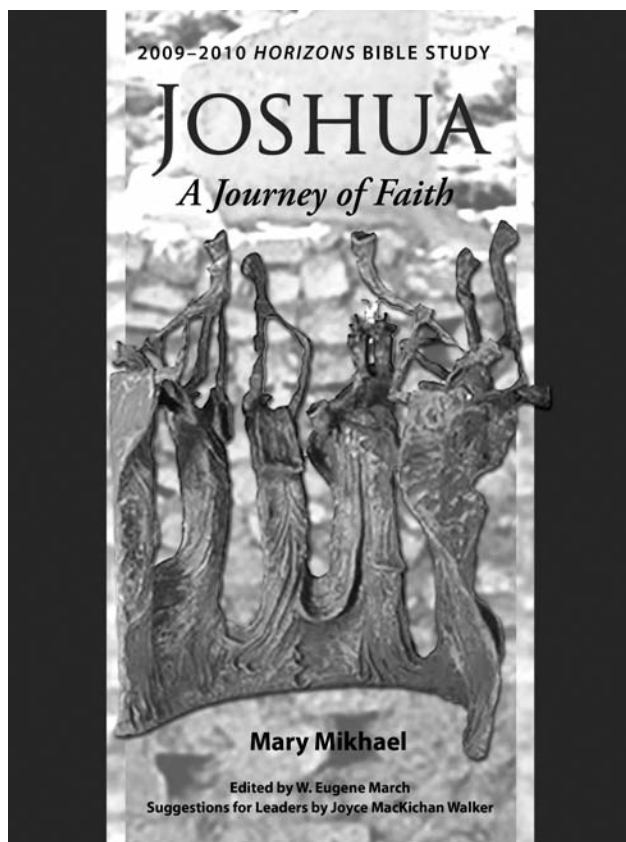


Joshua: A Journey of Faith

2009–2010 *Horizons* Bible Study by Mary Mikhael

Workshop for Leaders

By Joyce MacKichan Walker



What Is This?

A lesson plan for leaders to use in introducing *Joshua: A Journey of Faith* to Presbyterian Women or any group that plans to use this study

Who Is This For, and Why?

- Bible study leaders can use this workshop at a gathering of Presbyterian Women or any group in the congregation, to introduce the study and generate interest and enthusiasm for upcoming study sessions
- Bible study leaders can also use this workshop at a gathering of Presbyterian Women in the presbytery, to introduce the study to leaders at the congregational level

Main Idea

By exploring the nine themes in the study, and the contextual background for the book of *Joshua*, participants will be better able to interpret and understand *Joshua*. Such preparation discourages the traditional tendency to focus only on the details of the conquest and

the more sensational “miraculous” victories found in portions of the *Joshua* narrative. Participants will be better equipped to focus on what they can learn about God and God’s relationship with God’s people in the book of *Joshua*.

What Will Participants Learn During This Workshop?

Depending on the teaching activities selected, participants will

1. identify and locate the multitude of resource helps provided in the study book;
2. examine the authorship and historical and literary context of the book of *Joshua*, and state possible implications of this information for their interpretation and use of *Joshua*;
3. identify the nine themes explored in the lessons and imagine possible connections to their own lives of faith;
4. begin an exploration of issues in contemporary Israel and Palestine;
5. sing some of the hymns recommended for use with each lesson; and
6. view the art with an eye to connections with their own life and experience.

Materials Needed

- Hymnals
- Newsprint and markers
- Pens or pencils for each participant
- Printed copies of the instructions for small group activities
- Copies of “Suggested Hymns” handout
- One copy of the 2009–2010 *Horizons* Bible study per person (a minimum of nine copies; one per small group is recommended, if one study per person is not possible)

Lesson Plan

Engage

Welcome participants and tell them they are about to explore the 2009–2010 *Horizons* Bible study, *Joshua: A Journey of Faith*, published by and for Presbyterian Women.

Say “Names often have meanings—do you know what your name means? Turn to your neighbor and tell each other what you know about the meaning of your name, or explain why you were given your name.” (You might have some name books available in case some want to look up their names.)

After allowing a couple of minutes for the name stories, say, “Names of biblical characters were often changed. As I call out a name, you call out the name it was changed to.”

- “Abram” (Abraham)
- “Sarai” (Sarah)
- “Jacob” (Israel)
- “Saul” (Paul)
- “Peter” (The Rock)

Ask “What did a name change signify?”

Tell participants that Joshua, too, had his name changed, although his name is not usually in the list of ones we know.

Say “When Joshua was selected to represent his tribe as a spy sent by Moses to the land of Canaan, he was named Hoshea, son of Nun (*Num. 13:8*). Of all the representatives listed (*Num. 13:1–16*), only one is singled out for a name change—Hoshea, son of Nun, whom Moses renames *Joshua*.”

Ask “What might that name change indicate to us?”

Point out the first paragraph of the Introduction to the *Joshua* study and note that Moses gave him a name that means “Salvation,” or “The Lord saves.”

Ask “What might Joshua’s name, ‘Salvation,’ foreshadow in the continuing story of Israel?”

Examine

Tell participants that because this year’s Bible study is on a lesser-known book, it contains some additional resources that will serve as aids throughout the year. Point out and help them find:

1. all the maps and timelines sprinkled throughout the study
2. the definitions at the end of the study
3. the special section, *In Context*, that follows each of the first five lessons
4. the informational sidebars in each lesson

Brainstorm and list on two side-by-side sheets of newsprint

- “things you know about Joshua the leader” and
- “things you know about the book of *Joshua*.”

Pay close attention to any references participants make to the conquest of the land and ideas about war. In particular, note any allusions to God’s directive to fight the inhabitants of Canaan and mention of *herem* (total extermination of the enemy). Point out how important it is to discuss ahead of time what to listen and look for as participants study the book of *Joshua*.

Using the information provided in the Introduction, review what the writer says about:

1. Authorship—The book of *Joshua* is *about* the person Joshua and the nation of ancient Israel; it was not *written by* Joshua.
2. Historical context—The situation in Canaan at the time of Joshua relates directly to interpretation of the book of *Joshua*.
3. Time of writing—Along with *Judges, 1* and *2 Samuel*, and *1* and *2 Kings*, the book of *Joshua* was written during the time of the exile in Babylon (around 550 BCE).
4. Literary context—*Joshua* is a theological and literary work that is part of the Deuteronomistic History, a compilation of traditions that provides a history and identity for the ancient Israelites as they wrestle with why the exile has occurred.

Ask “What is new to you in this understanding of the book of *Joshua*? What are some implications of keeping these ideas in mind as we look at themes in the book of *Joshua*?” If this understanding of the book of *Joshua* is very new, startling, or unsettling to some participants, invite them to keep these ideas in mind as they work their way through the book of *Joshua*, intentionally noticing what difference this kind of understanding makes as they interpret the book together. Assure them that people can approach *Joshua* from many different places and still fruitfully examine what is to be learned about God and God’s relationship with God’s people by exploring these themes.

Explore

Divide into nine small groups (a group can be one person or more), one group per lesson. Ask each group to look at the art for their lesson, the Key Idea in the lesson, and the Lesson Theme in Suggestions for Leaders, then skim the section titles and the closing prayer. Instruct them to prepare a one-sentence description of what they think the lesson will be about, and then write one sentence about a connection they can imagine the lesson making to their own lives and their relationship with God.

Express

As you hear reports from each of the nine groups, make a list on one sheet of newsprint of the nine themes. On a second sheet, list the possible connections to our lives and relationship with God.

Give each participant three stickers (colored dots work well, but markers will suffice). Invite them to vote for the three connections that are most relevant to them by placing their stickers or marks on the newsprint beside their choices. Note the ones that garnered the most “votes,” and therefore the most interest.

Empower

Point to the first paragraph in the Jumping into Scripture section of the Introduction to the study. Say “The author exhorts us to

1. listen for countervoices as well as dominant themes, and to
2. listen for the theological message—what the scripture teaches us about God and about God’s relationship with God’s people.”

Tell the participants that they are well-prepared to do this, having imagined what some of those teachings might be.

Closing

Prayer

Creator God, may we take from these lessons important truths that we can use to help bring about your realm on earth. Guide us as we work for peace and rest for all your creation. Lift our spirits and fill us with courage so that we may advocate for brothers and sisters who are homeless and marginalized. Strengthen us for the journey as we partner with churches and other organizations working for justice in the Middle East and in other troubled areas of the world. Be with our political leaders as they make decisions that affect millions of lives. Finally, inspire in us your call to leadership and make us mediators in times of conflict. May we comfort the afflicted, feed the hungry, clothe the naked. Make us sensitive to the needs of those around us, and guide us as we work to bring everyone to your table. Amen.

Hymn*

PH #432, “*Canto de Esperanza* (Song of Hope)”
This hymn claims our place in promoting God’s justice, bringing light and hope, and working for all people.

*from *The Presbyterian Hymnal* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1999)

Additional Activities

If you have access to the internet in your Bible study room, consider going to the PC(USA) web site and showing participants the information about who is serving in mission in Israel/Palestine (www.pcusa.org/worldwide/israelpalestine). Point out the recent articles, the archive of all the news since 1999, resources for celebrating the Week of Prayer and Witness with Christians in the Middle East, and the multitude of other informational resources.

OR

Survey the web site ahead of the lesson and select a resource appropriate for your group and situation. Challenge your group to do something to become better informed about the issues in Israel/Palestine.

OR

Order a copy of *Presbyterian Church (USA) Mission and Witness in the Middle East*, a CD that provides a PowerPoint overview of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)’s mission and witness in the Middle East,

specifically in Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel/Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria (www.pcusa.org/worldwide/israelpalestine/me-resource.htm). Show it at the end of this introduction, during a general PW gathering, or at a specially called gathering that highlights the connections between the study of *Joshua* and the situation in the Middle East today. Be sure to refer to the author's Personal Note in the Preface, which helps us understand this connection from the perspective of one who grew up and serves in the region.

Have copies of *The Presbyterian Hymnal* available. Invite someone to play the hymns suggested for each lesson, and have an informal hymn sing as people gather, or as you end the lesson. Mention that these hymns have been

chosen because they convey the themes of each lesson in some way. Make copies of the handout of hymns and encourage participants to sing this hymn or one of their own choosing with each lesson.

AND/OR

Ask participants to select one of the nine lessons. Ask "What features do you see in the art for this lesson that draw your attention to the theme?" Encourage participants to examine the art for one of the three lessons they marked previously with a sticker, because of their interest in the connection to their own lives. Ask "In what way might your personal interest be represented or reflected in this picture?"

One-Month Plan for Reading *Deuteronomy, Joshua, and Judges*

According to the Introduction, *Deuteronomy* forms the theological base for the book of *Joshua*. Below is a one-month plan for reading and/or skimming the books of *Deuteronomy, Joshua, and Judges* before you participate in the study:

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| Day 1: Read an introduction to <i>Deuteronomy</i> in a study Bible | Day 16: <i>Joshua</i> 1–2 |
| Day 2: <i>Deuteronomy</i> 1–3 | Day 17: <i>Joshua</i> 3–5 |
| Day 3: <i>Deuteronomy</i> 4–6 | Day 18: <i>Joshua</i> 6–8 |
| Day 4: <i>Deuteronomy</i> 7–9 | Day 19: <i>Joshua</i> 9 |
| Day 5: <i>Deuteronomy</i> 10–12:28 | Day 20: <i>Joshua</i> 10–11 |
| Day 6: <i>Deuteronomy</i> 12:29–15 | Day 21: Rest |
| Day 7: Rest | Day 22: Skim <i>Joshua</i> 12; read 13:1–7; skim 13:8–15:62; read 15:63 |
| Day 8: <i>Deuteronomy</i> 16–18 | Day 23: Skim <i>Joshua</i> 16–19 |
| Day 9: <i>Deuteronomy</i> 19–21:21 | Day 24: <i>Joshua</i> 20; skim 21:1–42; read 21:43–45 |
| Day 10: <i>Deuteronomy</i> 21:22–25:4 | Day 25: <i>Joshua</i> 22 |
| Day 11: <i>Deuteronomy</i> 25:5–27 | Day 26: <i>Joshua</i> 23–24 |
| Day 12: <i>Deuteronomy</i> 28–30 | Day 27: Read an introduction to <i>Judges</i> in a study Bible |
| Day 13: <i>Deuteronomy</i> 31–34 | Day 28: Rest |
| Day 14: Rest | Day 29: <i>Judges</i> 1 |
| Day 15: Read an introduction to <i>Joshua</i> in a study Bible | Day 30: <i>Judges</i> 2–3:6 |

Additional Resources Available from PDS (800/524-2612)

By Tammy Wiens-Sorge: *Be Strong and Courageous: Praying with Joshua* (HZN-09-130)

By Mary Elva Smith: *Listening for God: Reflecting on the Book of Joshua* (HZN-09-140)

Horizons

Subscribers will receive additional Bible study resources in five consecutive issues of *Horizons*, beginning with the July/August 2009 issue. To subscribe, call 866/802-3635.

Suggested Hymns*

For each lesson of the 2009–2010 *Horizons* Bible study,
Joshua: A Journey of Faith

Lesson One: Who Is the God of Joshua #169, “In the Day of Need”

Listen to the words of the first two verses as if they are a prayer for ancient Israel as it crosses the Jordan river. Hear verse three as an affirmation of God’s continuing promises and actions on behalf of God’s people. Verse four brings a corrective—we do not understand God as a God of military might and war; instead, we acknowledge God’s realm in our midst. While in exile, ancient Israelites understood their “collapse and fall” in war as God’s judgment on their unfaithfulness. Their return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple also was a return to reliance on God.

Lesson Two: A Leader Is Called #419, “How Clear Is Our Vocation, Lord”

Sing verses one through three at the beginning of the lesson, imagining this as Joshua’s understanding of God’s call to lead Israel. These verses express both his faithfulness to God’s call and the pressure of the challenges he faced. Sing all four verses at the end of the session, recognizing yourselves as the leaders God calls. Sing verse four as a prayer of commitment to join Joshua in the act of leading, and looking to Jesus as the ultimate example of servant-hood.

Lesson Three: Entry into the Land #237, “When God Delivered Israel”

Sing the story of God’s deliverance from bondage and the surrounding nations’ recognition of God’s power. Take special notice that the people give God the credit. Wonder aloud together what it might mean to ask God to restore nations—what kind of restoration do you believe our nation needs? What might “irrigate dry souls”? What might we do to enable this irrigation process? What are the joys the “song of joy” expresses?

Lesson Four: The Land of Promise or the Promised Land? #273, “O God the Creator”

This hymn presents God’s timeless protection, our connection and community with all people in God’s love, and our need of God’s presence as we exercise leadership. It acknowledges that the land is God’s gift, given so that we might live together with others in peace, and captures the sense that the world is to be shared. How do you view the land? What does ownership mean to you in God’s world? Look at this hymn for connections to the theology of land espoused in this lesson.

Lesson Five: Can War Be Holy? #471, “O Praise the Gracious Power”

Jesus Christ and his cross are praised as the power that draws us toward one another and away from fear, exclusion, racism, prejudice, hierarchy and war. How can we ultimately see war as holy when Christ has made the ultimate sacrifice so that all might experience grace, truth and love?

Lesson Six: Outsiders Become Insiders: Rahab and the Gibeonites
#386, “O for a World”

In speaking of mutual respect, love, justice, sharing material wealth, spoken truth and equality, this hymn praises a world where such marks of God’s reign will prevail. It boldly claims that outcasts belong, and names the struggle that comes with choosing unity and striving for the realization of this vision. This hymn asks us, “Do we really want this welcoming unity enough to choose it and speak our vision? Or are we secretly and sinfully content with the way things are?”

Lesson Seven: God’s Concern for Justice: The Cities of Refuge
#434, “Today We All Are Called to Be Disciples”

The cities of refuge represent God’s desire for justice and God’s call to all of us to participate in achieving God’s justice. This hymn affirms the same sentiment, clearly listing our responsibilities for doing God’s justice in our time. It also picks up the previously studied themes of the gift of the land for our stewardship and God’s call to be leaders and disciples.

Lesson Eight: The Place of Rest
#403, “What a Friend We Have in Jesus”

This beloved hymn recognizes Jesus as our rest and affirms the teaching in *Hebrews* that Jesus both bears and forgives the sins of those who believe and trust in Him. What a joy to rest in the arms of Jesus, who provides comfort and true friendship.

Lesson Nine: The Challenge of God’s Covenant
#275, “God of Our Life”

Although not mentioning the covenant directly, this hymn looks back, sees God’s hand at work, and affirms God’s mercy and our trust. The mention of “hope’s true promised land” is reminiscent of Lesson Four’s focus on the land of promise, and it points us to our hope of a future with God. An excellent hymn to close this study of *Joshua*, verse three is our strong prayer that God go with us as we leave *Joshua*—providing refuge, sustenance and “our heart’s true home.”

*from *The Presbyterian Hymnal* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1999)