

“Letting Go”

Made For More Sermon Series | Week Five | Newbreak Church

February 6th, 2022

Newbreak’s Sermon Study Guide is an in-house resource that serves sermon-based Life Groups and/or individuals who want to reflect further on how the message contributes to their spiritual formation.

In this week’s study, we talk about being branded by God—belonging to Him as He shapes our identity. In this part of the book of Joshua, circumcision is the means for Israel to mark themselves as belonging to God. While this might be odd or awkward for us, there are some important themes for us to consider, even for our current context. Because who we are becoming matters as we pursue the “more” God has for us.

Icebreakers for Life Groups

- What is one dream you have had come to fruition?
- What does it mean to “belong” to God?

Going Deeper Into the Message

Read Joshua 5:2–7; Colossians 2:11–14

How am I being formed by God?

Point 1 – Open myself to God transforming my identity.

In the early stages of God transforming us “we rarely need to *add* anything, but there is almost always something we hold on to that we need to *subtract*.” For the Hebrew people in Joshua 5, this meant remembering the covenant’s call to circumcision.

God had commanded their ancestors that every male be circumcised, yet none of the men of Joshua’s generation had obeyed this command. It would have been much easier to follow God’s original command and have the young boys circumcised on the eighth day after birth, but now they were adults and God called them back to obey what he originally asked of them!

Joshua 5:9 shows that this act (circumcision) removed the shame of the past life that slavery in Egypt had on the Hebrew people. And with another step of obedience came another step into the blessing that the new territory holds. There is no doubt about it, the physical operation of circumcision was meant to symbolize the spiritual operation on the heart (see Jeremiah 4:4). Colossians 2:11–12 (NLT) shows us how the principle of circumcision applies to us today. It says:

11 When you came to Christ, you were “circumcised,” but not by a physical procedure. Christ performed a spiritual circumcision—the cutting away of your sinful nature. **12** For you were buried with Christ when you were baptized. And with him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead.

When we give our life to Jesus we are put under a spiritual operation where God now has permission to cut away what no longer belongs and give us a new life and new identity. In Christ, we belong to Him, so similarly He wants us to cut away things that separate us from Him. Circumcision is not what matters to us today, but the principle remains intact. While God declares us to be a “new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17) the moment we respond to His call, He takes us through a process of becoming—where we *become what we already are* in a sense. The process cannot be rushed or evaded. As in the growth of an orchard, these things don’t happen overnight. What God does beautifully, He does slowly. God is chiefly concerned with who we are becoming, but we cannot embark on the journey of becoming unless we first brand our heart as belonging to the Lord.

Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- What do you think of the sentence above, “What God does beautifully, He does slowly?” Have you ever been frustrated by the slowness of God?”
- While there are many cultural differences between the Israelites then, and us now, what can you appreciate about how “circumcision of the heart” teaches us about belonging to God?
- What are some ways people might see that our hearts are branded by God and belong to Him? While it is an inner reality, are there ways we can showcase the evidence of it?

Read Joshua 5:7–9; Hebrews 12:1; John 15:2

Point 2 – Remove what is hindering me from becoming all God has for me.

God wanted to let this new generation know that He was removing that which would keep them from stepping into the leadership roles that were once held by their parents. He wants to do the same for us today. He is constantly building His body, the Church, so that we can step into new areas of leadership, while those ahead of us move on to even greater roles of leadership. He prepares the younger generation to take over for the previous generation.

God wants to take away those areas that are in the way of new growth in our lives. When He cuts away the areas of our lives that are dead, it makes space for the ways in which He is going to challenge us to become the people He created us to be. **He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful (John 15:2, NIV). This may not always be a comfortable process, but the fruit it will yield is well worth the seasonal discomfort, or pain.**

The wonderful aspect of our loving Father in this pruning and growth process is that He gives us time to heal. He wants us to take time to heal from the shame and sin that once enslaved us. When we give those areas of our lives that are dead over to God to peel away the sin and the shame, He holds us for a bit and comforts us until our hearts are healed. Then we can move forward to gain the victory He has for us. **After all the males had been circumcised, they rested in the camp until they were healed. Then the Lord said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the shame of your slavery in Egypt." So that place has been called Gilgal to this day (Joshua 5:8-9, NLT).**

Give God permission to remove the old, dead areas in your life to make room for the new growth He has planned for you. Let Him take away the shame and heal your heart. Then step out in victory, knowing He will give you what He has promised.

Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- Do you sense God pruning any specific areas of your life? How long has God been working in that area? What role do you play in that pruning process?
- Why do you think it was important for God to "roll away" the shame of their past? Have you ever allowed shame from your past to keep you from receiving the love of the "Gentle and Lowly" Savior? How did you work through that with God (or are you still working through it)?

Read Joshua 5:10–12

Point 3 – Enjoy and experience new provision that comes from my new identity.

After obeying God's call to circumcision, the Israelites celebrated Passover, but with newfound inspiration since they were obediently living out who God called them to be. And what happened as a result of their steps of obedience? They began to eat "from the crops of the land" ([v. 12](#)). For YEARS their steady diet consisted of manna. But now they were eating of the earth's variety within the promised land. There is a principle here: *Rights and responsibility go hand-in-hand.*

As the Israelites took new steps of obedience, new privileges followed suit. In this case, eating food directly from the promised land was a blessing that surely surpassed eating the manna. No hate toward manna, it was God's provision during the wandering years. But manna was never God's best for His people. It was a temporary solution.

The Israelites were made for more than manna, but they couldn't enjoy the new provision until they came to terms with their new identity as a people belonging to the Lord.

We all have God-given responsibilities. And if we want to open the ground to receive the new privileges that come from walking faithfully with God, we might want to start taking our identity seriously. Our hearts no longer wander without a home. We have a home in the heart of God. And so when we live out of a place of belonging to Him, we find that everything finds its proper place.

Now, a fair word of caution, we don't determine what blessings or privileges God will grant to us on this side of eternity. Being faithful to God does not give us some sort of leverage over God. Just as we let go of our former identity to grab hold of who we are in God, we also have to relinquish our desires into His hand and let our hands be open to what He has for us. Trust His goodness. You were made for more.

Questions for Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

- Is trusting God for financial provision hard for you? Why or why not?
- What would make it easier for you to trust God for financial provision?

- When was the last time that you saw God clearly provide for you when there didn't seem to be any options? How did that act of God impact your relationship with Him?

—FINAL CHALLENGE QUESTIONS—

How are you going to think differently in light of what you have read, heard, and discussed this week?

What is one thing you are going to change in your life in light of the sermon?

BONUS: For those of you with kids or around kids: What is one truth from this message that you can share with your kids?