

# Choose This Day Whom You Will Serve

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, good morning. It's good to see all of you this morning. We're beginning a new series, a series through the book of Judges.

This will take us in June, July, August, and then a couple of weeks in September. I would encourage every one of you to pick up one of these. This is a study guide, and there'll be one of these for each month as we move our way through.

My guess is that most of us are unfamiliar with the book of Judges, and there's probably a number of reasons for that.

One is that Judges is kind of a depressing book. And, you know, it starts well, but it doesn't take long.

You get into chapter 2, and then all of a sudden, darkness. All of a sudden, moral collapse. All of a sudden, you find a people who have turned their back on the Lord, and from that chapter on to the end of the book, it doesn't get better.

[ 1 : 04 ] It just gets worse. So you're like, Andrew, what are you doing? What are you thinking? Going through the book of Judges, of all things. The reason we're going through the book of Judges is because of this theme right here.

It's a study of faithfulness and failure. We come to the book of Judges not because we want to feel good, necessarily.

We come to the book of Judges because it's in the process of learning and discovering who God is in spite of who we are. We see his faithfulness.

We see his promise-keeping power. We see the things that he has promised hundreds of years before and that in spite, in spite of the rebellion and wickedness and foolishness and moral depravity and moral collapse of his people, God's character stands.

His faithfulness continues in spite of the people. And for anyone in this room who really has an understanding of who they are and can appreciate that in the backdrop of your life and maybe even in the present day, there are things that you will not even share with your best friends.

[ 2 : 25 ] There are skeletons in the closet. There are things that you will never bring out to the forefront because of maybe you're embarrassed, maybe you're ashamed. And the testimony of the book of Judges is God not only knows, but God is faithful.

So we come to a book that highlights the character of God. We come to a book where the darkness settles in and it's almost suffocating so that we get to the end of this book and we wonder, I'm going to have to be very selective and I'm trying to figure out already, how in the world are we going to go through chapters 17 through 21?

Because there are parts of this book that are not PG, okay? They're not the kinds of stories that you're going to read necessarily to a mixed audience.

But time and time again, we're going to see the wonder of God's faithfulness in spite of a wicked people. And because of the backdrop of this book, it's not really a book that we're going to read much.

It's not going to be like on the top 10 list of the books that you're going to memorize or the kinds of books that you're going to study. And that's why it's so important to engage. We're going to engage this book.

[ 3 : 52 ] There are places in this book and there are people in this book that you have probably never heard of. And in order to really appreciate the profile and the story of what God's doing and especially come to the place of recognizing the wonder of who God is, you want to engage.

You want to do that extra work for yourself to kind of get in the flow of this study and to appreciate it to the max. And so this is for devotional reading.

This is for your own personal edification. For those of you who are part of a Connect group, I understand that today's Connect group was phenomenal. And so thank you, Chad, for leading that today. There are going to be several young men who will be doing this the next 12 weeks. And I would encourage you to do the work yourself but also to be part of a Connect group to continue to fill out, fill out in your own heart and mind the wonder of God. God. We're spotlighting the faithfulness, the nature, the character of God. He, he's on display. And we're going to see him against the backdrop of a very dark world and the darker things get, the brighter God gets.

[ 5 : 06 ] That's the testimony of the book of Judges. So I would encourage you to turn with me if you would. In the book of Judges, we're going to, it's on page 200 if you're using the Pew Bible.

And we're going to kind of be working between a couple of different books. The book of Judges and the book of Joshua kind of sets the stage, the introduction to what we see in Judges.

We kind of lean to lay the groundwork so we can really appreciate what's taking place here. We can understand the depravity that is taking place and spotlighting again the glory, the wonder of who God is.

And so in Joshua chapter 24, we come to these closing words of Joshua, kind of the parting words as it were, as he's issuing a statement to his people, to the nation of Israel and he wants to call them to something.

He's learned something for himself. He wants the nation to enjoy the benefits of what he himself has experienced. The nature of God has settled on his heart and he wants to commend that to the nation so they don't forget it.

[ 6 : 17 ] They don't miss it. They don't lose it. So in Joshua chapter 24 verses 14 and 15, he says this, Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness.

Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the river and in Egypt and serve the Lord.

Choose this day whom you will serve. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

Joshua understood a couple things about the nature of God. As he ministered to the nation, as he helped to lead them into the promised land, this land of conquest, there were two things that were front and center on Joshua's mind.

First, fear the Lord. What does it mean to fear the Lord? Does it mean to cower? Does it mean to tremble? Yes, it does. But it means something more.

It means that you have such an understanding of the nature of God that there is this reverence in your heart. There is this understanding about who God is.

[ 7 : 29 ] and it begins to shape your perspective. It helps to put you in your place. It helps you to appreciate the wonder of his presence in spite of who you are.

And so Joshua wants this nation at the very front end of his departure and turning it over to this nation, fear the Lord. Know who God is.

And that fear will turn to service. Fear the Lord and serve him. This is the word for obedience.

It's the word for slavery. It's the word for bondage. It's the word for reverence that turns into devotion and obedience to him.

So, to fear the Lord and serve him. Orient your heart towards him. Devote your life in obedience in every way. And throughout the book of Judges this will be the issue.

[ 8 : 27 ] This will be the ongoing issue that the nation will struggle with all the time. It's about service. Service, worship, devotion to God. We see that right out of the gate in chapter 2 of Judges beginning in verse 11.

It says this. This is kind of the commentary. Right out of the gate of the people of the nation it says this. And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals.

They abandoned the Lord the God of their fathers who had brought them out of the land of Egypt.

They went after other gods from among the gods of the peoples who were around them and they bowed down to them and they provoked the Lord to anger.

They abandoned the Lord and they served the Baals and the Ashtra. You see, the book of Judges is first a book of worship. It's not a book just of stories.

It's a book of worship. And because it's a book of worship it is a book of service. Your service to God that shows up in obedience to Him devotion to Him and coupling your heart in devotion to Him and you might even say bondage to Him so that you serve His purposes.

[ 9 : 43 ] He is the master and you are the slave in that respect. You have determined in your heart in your life that you will do what God says because you fear Him. And so this book of Judges is meant to call us to that kind of life.

And Joshua commends this kind of life because he's experienced the benefits of this life and he wants to commend that life to the nation. He wants them to enjoy the benefits of what God has to give through fear and through service of Him.

There's a leadership decision that needs to happen. And we're going to talk a little bit about the leaders that God has had placed over this nation and the benefit of those leaders. But those leaders were just representatives.

Moses as a leader and Joshua as a leader they weren't to call attention to themselves they were to call their attention to the leadership of God. That God was preeminently the leader of the people. He was the one who was responsible for carrying the people into the promised land. He was the promise maker and he was the promise keeper. It was a choice of leadership.

[ 10 : 56 ] Every one of us in this room have a choice to make. Choose you this day whom you will serve. Joshua would say as for me in my house we will serve the Lord.

Will we follow in his steps? Will we enjoy the benefits of Joshua's example his leadership? Well the World Economic Forum's future of Jobs Report in 2025 kind of identifies some of the key features of the leaders that this culture this world would seek to have.

And they identified that the top leadership quality was someone who had analytical thinking ability who was a strategic planner who was somebody who could bring it and carry others along with him. Then it lists things like resilience and flexibility agility leadership and social influence. You look around and perhaps you would even be familiar with other kinds of leadership qualities that our world embraces.

The kinds of things like strength and confidence assertiveness does not back down. The kind of person with tenacity who's a polished orator and of course those things have their benefits in terms of leadership but the kinds of leadership that God calls us to are entirely different.

[ 12 : 19 ] The kinds of leadership that are marked by humility. God opposes the proud. He gives grace to the humble. What kind of leader is humble?

Well, God's kind of leader is humble and Joshua needed humility and he also needed to understand the significance of dependence on the Lord and this mark a mark of service to others.

How does a leader serve? Well, Jesus set the example didn't he? Because the Lord Jesus came not to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many.

That's the quality of godly leadership that Jesus illustrated and commends. So we're looking at we're looking at this nation that enjoyed the benefits of godly leadership but it wasn't the kind of leadership that the world models or celebrates.

It's the kind of leadership that God celebrates. Are you choosing to fear the Lord? Are you choosing to serve him? And as we work our way through the book of Judges we're going to see the benefits of what happens when Israel the nation chooses God.

[ 13 : 33 ] They choose to serve him. Choose you this day whom you will serve as for me and my house will serve the Lord. So in the opening this opening message I want to just draw out for us several different characteristics the kinds of characteristics that will mark those who choose to serve the Lord.

And the benefits are obvious as we look back on the life of Moses and the life of Joshua. In Judges chapter 1 verse 1 we get to learn from the godly leaders that God has set over us.

When we choose to serve the Lord we're learning from the examples of those leaders that God has placed over us. And in Judges chapter 1 verse 1 calls attention to that.

It says, These opening verses call attention to the incredible nature of Joshua's ministry.

How prominent it was. How useful it was. And here we have a death of a leader Joshua that many of you are probably familiar with. Joshua of course was instrumental in securing this new land this promised land for the people.

[ 15 : 03 ] And God had stated going all the way back to Abraham that the people the nation would have a land. And so this promise keeping God maintained those promise through the generations through 400 years a promise was made.

and through Joshua that promise was secured. God remembered that promise even though Jacob and his 12 sons and family made their way to Egypt you remember.

And they stayed there for 400 years and while the Pharaoh and the leaders who were there forgot Joseph and forgot what God had done through his leadership God had not forgotten. God had not forgotten his promise he had not forgotten his people. So God raises up Moses right and Moses leads the people out of Egypt and he leads them into the wilderness he leads them to Mount Sinai and he reestablishes a promise a covenant with his people this covenant relationship. See God had not forgotten his people even though 400 years have gone by. And they wander in the wilderness for 40 years. And Moses dies he has to depart but he turns over the reins to Joshua and all of that is emblematic of helping us understand that the work of God is not dependent on leaders themselves but on God working through leaders.

[16:27] What a joy. What an encouragement. That God works through leaders independently of their charisma independently of what they bring to the table.

That's the testimony of Moses and Joshua who both expressed their inadequacy who both brought that to the table and said God you can't use me but God says no I've got something to prove in using you.

I'm proving myself through you and so God uses Joshua. And we see this statement in Joshua chapter 1 verses 1 and 2.

After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord the Lord said to Joshua the son of Nun Moses' assistant Moses my servant is dead now therefore arise go over this Jordan you and all this people into the land that I'm giving to you are giving to them to the people of Israel.

And there's something striking to notice here. As we begin this study that Moses has passed from the scene and we're gonna get to Judges and we're gonna see where we saw in verse 1 Joshua has departed from the scene.

[17:40] And the significance of this is that perhaps the greatest Old Testament leaders that we can put our finger on and draw attention to were useful because God chose to make them useful.

And the strategy that we're gonna see as we work our way through here is continuing to draw attention to what Joshua wants us to understand today. Fear God and serve him.

Choose you this day whom you will serve. People are faced with a dilemma. Joshua has departed from the scene and so another leader is gone and there is no clear leader to take their place and so what do they do?

We find in Judges chapter 1 verse 1 after the death of Joshua the people of Israel inquire to the Lord who shall go up for us against the Canaanites to fight against them.

They're beginning the right way. They recognize that leadership needs to be sanctioned by the Lord but this was a transition period that God had raised up Joshua but there was no one really at this time to take his place but God again is conditioning his people that continue to look to him for leadership but we find in Judges chapter 3 verse 9 the people of Israel cried out to the Lord the Lord raises up a deliverer for the people of Israel who saved them Otnael the son of Kenaz Caleb's younger brother and this will become the pattern they look to the Lord and then they rebel they pray to the Lord God raises up another deliverer then they life is going well they turn away and they move away from God God brings judgment then they cry to the Lord again the faithfulness of God to work through his people to work through his leaders see leadership is sought because there is a leadership vacuum here the book will continue to repeat this refrain that we find in Judges chapter 17 verse 6 in those days there was no king in Israel everyone did what was right in his own eyes where there may not have been a physical king in Israel but there was a king because the

[20:01] Lord was king and that's the point of Judges the point of Judges is God wants to continue to draw attention to himself as the preeminent leader of his people but they couldn't get it so they go through this cycle of sin and then looking to God and sinning again over and over again this becomes this tragic cycle in a statement that God has given he's given this clear testimony of himself to his people fear him fear him and serve him and then you'll enjoy the benefits of his leadership in your life so God God is calling and encouraging his people to choose him he does that by drawing their attention to learning from God's leaders and then we find in Joshua 1 1-9 that we're also to look to God's word learn from God's leaders but also look to

God's word Joshua is raised up as a leader and we find these instructions here in Joshua 1 again after the death of Moses the servant of the Lord the Lord said to Joshua the son of Nun Moses assistant Moses my servant is dead now therefore arise go over this Jordan you and all the people into the land that I'm giving to them to the people of Israel these marching orders these marching instructions I just wonder how was Joshua feeling in this moment this leader Moses this massive

leader who's led the people out of Egypt through the wilderness and now it's Joshua's turn but he's died and not only does Joshua have to lead these people through a wilderness but now he has to lead them directly into combat he has to lead them directly into opposition directly into the heart of the strongholds people who are tall and great fortified cities if the task wasn't difficult before imagine imagine how intimidated how afraid

Joshua must have felt in this case so God confirms his promise to Joshua we see that in Joshua 1.3 in Joshua 1.5 it says God says every place the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you just as I promised to Moses no man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life just as I was with Moses so I will be with you I will not leave you or forsake you so be strong and be courageous can you imagine God giving that kind of promise to you every place that the sole of your foot treads I have given to you just obey just do what I've said the the the victory is secure because I'm the one who brings the victory so trust me do what I say and you will enjoy the success that I have promised to give no man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life wow what a promise but Joshua was rightly afraid and so we find this repeated pattern in chapter one verses seven to nine see if you can follow the the pattern here only be strong and very courageous be careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left that you may have good success wherever you go this book of the law shall not depart from your mouth but you shall meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it for then you will make your way prosperous and then you will have good success!

what a comforting word what a word for us how often has God given us very specific very clear instructions and so often what stands in the way is a fear so often what stands in the way is feelings of inadequacy so often what stands in the way is our own trembling and worry about what people will say and whether or not it will be meaningful but the word of the Lord to Joshua was be strong and courageous and do what I've said because it doesn't depend on success doesn't depend on us success depends on the Lord and God wants to direct Joshua's attention right to the center and that's why he says this book of the law shall not depart from your mouth let the word of God prevail in your life let it carry you let it direct you let it organize your thoughts and steady the direction of your life and when it does you will enjoy the benefits of the success of God's plans unfolding and by the way those plans that God performs don't always look successful to us do they

Jesus hanging on a cross did not look like a successful plan to the people of Israel in the first century but it could have been more successful God's plan for the apostle Paul in his imprisonment in his repeated persecution being flogged being whipped being shipwrecked that did not look like success in the eyes of a watching world but it was success because God used Paul's obedience to open the door of the gospel in the midst of great suffering and opposition so you learn from God's leaders and you learn to look to God's word that's how we come to fear him that's how we come to serve him third we need to recognize that we live under God's design and this may be one of my favorites live under God's design God had not given immediate leadership in the book of Judges they don't exist at least in terms of a preeminent leader that there wasn't a standout person there wasn't another

[ 26 : 33 ] Moses like figure or a Joshua like figure but God had not left them without instructions he had not left them without a design first the design that God gave was his own appointed leaders we find in Deuteronomy chapter 16 verse 18 it says this this is Moses speaking you shall appoint judges and officers in all your towns that the Lord your God is giving according to your tribes and they shall judge the people with righteous judgment God had instituted judges judges who were local leaders those who would be among the people those who would know the word of God and those who would who would commend that word and resolve issues and resolve disputes and help carry the burdens of the people God had raised up this kind of instruction for leaders who would be among the people themselves not just away in in

Jerusalem or or those leaders who would be over the nation but leaders who would be among the people themselves that was God's design and we see how that works out in Exodus chapter 18 again this is Moses who moreover look for able men from all the people men who fear God who are trustworthy who hate a bribe those men of character and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands of hundreds of fifties and tens and let them judge the people at all times every great matter they shall bring to you but any small matter they shall decide among themselves so it will be easier for you and they will bear the burdens with you God has graciously given local leaders during

this time he recognizes the challenge of leading God's people and carrying burdens and understanding the things that are going on among them and resolving those disputes and helping to lead them in a very present way

God has given those leaders they will bear the burdens of the people they will be men of character I'm giving them to you as a gift to express my heart second they were also God raised up spiritual leaders we see that also in Deuteronomy chapter 17 verses 8 to 12 and I'm just going to paraphrase this for us this is God's instruction if there is a case that is too hard for you then go up to the place that the Lord will choose and come to the priest and to the judge who is there and they will declare to you the decision if this is too hard for you to settle between the two of you and it's too hard to settle with a judge then go up to the place of worship go to the place where the judges and the priests are there and they can help again to lead the people they can help you work through these issues these spiritual leaders again were a blessing from the

Lord a gift from God and third God entrusted the people with the word the word of God itself we find that in Deuteronomy chapter 4 verses 1 and 2 it says and now O Israel listen to the statutes and the rules that I am teaching you and do them that you may live and go in and take possession of the land that the Lord the God of your fathers is giving you you shall not add to my word that I command you nor take from it that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God that I command you may not have a Joshua figure to lead you you may not have a Moses figure to lead you but you have something better you have the local leadership structure that I have entrusted to you you have the priests who are there to help arbitrate through these difficult decisions and most importantly you have the word of God the word of God who help provide guidance and understanding as you are moving through the life that you're living trust the architecture trust the design that God has set in place they were not left without leadership

God cared enough for them to give them this design for leadership next not just learn from God's leaders and look to God's word and not just to live under God's design but to lament when God is forgotten lament when God is forgotten we're going to see through the book of Judges this moral collapse we're going to see a people who fail to obey the word of God fail to serve the Lord as God has called them to serve him so that by the time we get just to the second chapter Judges chapter 2 verse 6 says this when Joshua dismissed the people the people of Israel went each to his inheritance to take possession of the land and the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua who had seen all the great work that the Lord had done for Israel great news right they're moving in the right direction and then a couple of verses later we find this beginning in verse 10 and all that generation also were gathered to their fathers and there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord or the work that he had done for Israel and the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and they served the Baals and they abandoned the Lord the God of their fathers who had brought them out of the land of Egypt they went after other gods from among the gods of the peoples who were around them and they bowed down to them and they provoked the Lord to anger they abandoned the Lord and served the Baals and the

[ 32 : 47 ] Ashtera you notice the way that the author of Judges draws this right out into the open he repeats it for effect for emphasis he wants you to recognize how far and how immediately and how totally the people had abandoned God notice all the ways he describes it it says they did not know the Lord they did what was evil they served the Baals they abandoned the Lord they went after other gods they provoked the Lord verse 12 they abandoned the Lord verse 13 they served the Baals verse 13 their moral decline is described in terms that are total and seemingly immediate because the posture of their heart was moving in that direction and what we're going to find through our time in Judges is that everyone did what was right in their own eyes everyone did what was right in their own eyes you see what's incredible and surprising maybe even shocking about the book of

Judges is that in the midst of this depravity in the midst of their rebellion they are doing exactly what they think is right not what is wrong and that's our problem too the apostle Paul describes it this way in Romans chapter 3 verse 10 when he says this as it is written none is righteous no not one no one understands no one seeks for God all have turned aside together they have become worthless no one does good not even one who is he talking about he's talking about you he's talking about me everyone of us in this room apart from God when we do what is right in our own eyes we move this direction we move in a way that is not just opposed to God but we have become hostile towards

God and it describes we are enemies of God there's none who does right no not one here's the grace the grace of this is judges does not end in chapter 2 and things will get worse as you continue to move your way through the book but God remains faithful

God remains present God remains with his people he does not abandon them let that settle in the encouragement of judges is that regardless of what you have in your rear view mirror whatever you have in your past whatever skeletons are in your closet whatever things that you are ashamed of whatever things that are there that you wouldn't even speak to your best friends God knows and God will not abandon you God continues to invite you 1st John 1 9 that if you confess your sin he is faithful and just to forgive your sin and to cleanse you from all unrighteousness that is our God and that is a testimony of the book of Judges your God regardless of your history and your failures extends to you this blessing of forgiveness but it has to happen through confession of your sin repentance and turning away and turning your heart to God that's the offer that's the wonder of the book of Judges so we have a

God who encourages us to learn from our leaders or learn from godly leaders to look to God's word to live under God's design to lament to lament when we have done what is wrong when God is forgotten and finally to love God's sufficient word love God's sufficient word and so God's word to Joshua have not a command you be strong and have a good courage he says this book of the law shall not depart from your mouth Joshua but you shall meditate on it day and night and then you will make your way prosperous and then you will have good success but guess what that was not just an old testament old covenant kind of promise or word that the word applies to us today 2nd Timothy chapter 3 verses 16 and 17 notice the wonder the beauty of this word all scripture is breathed out by God and is profitable for teaching for reproof for correction and training for righteousness that the man of God may be complete equipped for every good work and I want to just draw attention briefly to a couple of things first I want you to see the comprehensive nature of the word of God all scripture is breathed out by God all of it and the significance of this

God breathed word this breathed out word it's only used in this place in all the Bible but it reminds us of what God did this first breathing that God did back in Genesis chapter 2 verse 7 where we find the Lord God formed the man of the dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and the man became a living creature God breathed that's the power of the word the divine word of God that breathes physical life into Adam is the same word that God breathes to allow us to enjoy spiritual life with him he's breathed out his word and it's a life giving word that he offers all of us and we have access to in the scripture we have the breathed out powerful living word of God at our fingertips you can enjoy the blessing the benefits of this breathed out divine word this powerful word of God it's in it's in our hands it's sufficient it's God's word it's true we find it's authoritative but not just the nature of the word of God

[ 39 : 30 ] I want you to see the comprehensive promise just briefly the comprehensive promise of the word of God that comes to us in this verse 2 all scripture is breathed out by God it's profitable for teaching for reproof for correction for instruction and training and righteousness that the man of God may be complete equipped for every good work every good work that's what the word of God does it addresses us in every place every sphere of life it not only addresses those things but it equips us and prepares us it completes us and it equips us for every good work so I often ask myself this question and maybe you would ask yourself this question too okay if the word of God the scripture has in it the life giving power of God and if bringing my heart and my life to the word of God helps to teach me and instruct me and reprove me and correct me so that

I am complete there's a picture of wholeness there's a picture of fullness there's a there's a picture there of that completeness so that so that I can be prepared for every good work if that is true then why do I feel so inadequate why do I feel so often that the work that God has for me is beyond me why do I feel so often that that the the path of obedience and the the call that he's given to me is harder than I'm able to do it shouldn't be that way if the word of God completes us what it means is that and I'm prepared for every good work it means that the word of God will equip me and help me to accomplish every work that God has for me to do every command that God has given to you through his word he has empowered through his

Holy Spirit for you to do can you imagine how unstoppable you are how unstoppable we are if we embrace the promise of that command that the the Moses syndrome that keeps us feeling inadequate when we couple that with the the all-powerful working of God and we let him do his work in and through us and we encourage instead of cowering like I am so inclined to do to cower to

be afraid to be intimidated to say no because I'm worried about the criticism or the opposition I might get if I press in and obey the Lord what might God do through our lives what might God accomplish what might what might you be able to see God do in and through you if you bend your heart to not just fear him but to serve him to choose this day whom you will serve and as Joshua says as for me and my house we will serve the Lord and I trust that will be our expression as well and the promise that God gave to Joshua that I will be with you wherever you go is the exact same promise that God applies to the church when he says I'm with you always even to the end of the age that's our God will we trust him with the word that he's given and the power of his spirit working through to see him accomplishing his power not because of us but through because of him his leadership in our lives oh may God help us let's pray Lord thank you for the power of your word help us oh God to tether our hearts to the word of God to anchor ourselves in the truth of your promise that you've been so faithful time and time again to carry out Lord may we do it even in spite of our own feelings of inadequacy and may we see your power at work in spite of us thank you for your promise keeping power help us to walk in it in Jesus name amen God bless you have a great week Thank you.