



**THE CHURCH**

**THE COMMUNITY**

**THE WORLD**



**TAKING**

**GROUND**

**\\COLWALL COMMUNITY CHURCH\\**

The Lord said to Joshua:

**" I PROMISE YOU WHAT I PROMISED MOSES: 'WHEREVER YOU SET FOOT, YOU WILL BE ON LAND I HAVE GIVEN YOU'.....BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS, FOR YOU ARE THE ONE WHO WILL LEAD THESE PEOPLE TO POSSESS ALL THE LAND I SWORE TO THEIR ANCESTORS I WOULD GIVE THEM."**

These are exciting days at CoCoChu. And scary ones too! On several fronts, we are looking to 'take ground'. Life groups are under way, taking ground by building deeper relationships with God, one another and our wider community. Tom starts part-time work for the church next month - to sustain his ministry we will need to take ground in the level of our regular giving. And we have the opportunity to take ground, literally, in Silver Street, a huge financial challenge on the near horizon.

All that ground to take seems more than a bit scary. We do well to remember Joshua, and the encouraging words God spoke to him as the people of Israel stood on the threshold of the Promised Land. With Jericho looming on their horizon,

they reminded themselves of God's faithfulness in the past and devoted themselves afresh to him, recognising their utter dependence upon him. In this place of weakness, Joshua encounters Jesus, appearing as the commander of the Lord's army. It's just what Joshua needs. The encounter 'right-sizes' God and the challenges ahead, and faith rises in Joshua's heart. Read the story again, in the first five chapters of Joshua, as a springboard for our own faith as we, too, seek to take ground.

## Practical notes

This guide is to be used during three weeks in November, to help us pray. There are different prayer pointers for each day that we hope you will find helpful in your personal praying. We shall also be joining together from time to time, to worship and seek God in united prayer.

There is room in the booklet for you to make notes of anything that you feel God is saying, and there will be opportunity at the end of the month to share these reflections.

Setting aside time with God can seem a bit daunting to begin with. The Bible gives us some 'helpful hints':

## Praying>>

Matt 6v6 "But when you pray, go into your prayer room and close the door"

- Find somewhere quiet
- Have a bible, notebook and pen handy
- Try to develop a regular habit

## Fasting>>

- a denial of appetite(s) for a period of time for the purposes of seeking God – it goes hand in hand with prayer and can be done in creative ways: give up TV, miss lunch and go for a prayer walk, fast for one day in the week. Do it privately and incorporate prayer.

## Children>>

- Why not involve the whole family, if possible? Explain to children what we are praying about and encourage them to join in. They often hear God more easily than the adults!

## All-together events>>

Sunday 6 November - Evening Prayer  
7:00 pm at CoCoChu HES

Monday 7 November – Weekly prayer meeting  
4:30pm at CoCoChu Main Room

Monday 14 November – Weekly prayer meeting  
4:30pm at CoCoChu Main Room

Sunday 20 November – Step Out of the Traffic 7:00pm  
at CoCoChu HES

Monday 21 November – Weekly prayer meeting  
4:30pm at CoCoChu Main Room

**Sunday 27 November – During the morning service, we will go out on to the Silver Street site and pray there for God to give us the ground!**

# DAY 1 – Monday 7 November

## Joshua 4:19

*'They camped at Gilgal'*

This is the first reference to Gilgal In Joshua, but not the last. As they set about possessing the land, the people of Israel return to Gilgal time and again. It would be a place of rest and refreshment, of remembering and rededicating, of realignment and recommissioning.

But here at the start, with the River Jordan behind them and Jericho's walls within sight, Israel was not yet ready, as far as God was concerned, to begin.

### PRAYER POINTS

*This is what the Sovereign LORD, the Holy One of Israel, says: "Only in returning to me and resting in me will you be saved. In quietness and confidence is your strength." Isaiah 30:15*

- *Every enterprise for God must be fuelled by faith. Faith comes by hearing God speak to our hearts and if our hearts are full of fear, or of bravado, we will not hear clearly.*

- *As we contemplate the 'ground' ahead of us as a church, what rises in our hearts? For Joshua, there was a good deal of fear and trepidation! Just look at how many times God said to him, in Chapter 1 alone, 'be strong and courageous'! Let's be honest with God (he reads our hearts anyway), confessing our fears and concerns.*
- *At Gilgal, they camped. Right under the noses of the people of Jericho. I think God wanted them to get a good view of those impregnable walls, and of their own lack of weaponry and fighting skills. Bravado is as disabling as fear, so let's allow God to root both out of our hearts.*

## notes

## DAY 2 – Tuesday 8 November

# Joshua 4:20

Read the whole of Chapter 4 again. These 12 stones, one for each tribe, had been taken from the exact spot where the priests had stood in the bed of the River Jordan, as God miraculously stemmed its flow to allow the people to cross safely. You and your children need to remember this, God said. So build a memorial to remind you and future generations that 'the Lord's hand is powerful' (4:24)

### ||| PRAYER POINTS |||

- *When faced with the 'impossible', it is good to remember God's faithfulness in the past. Answers to prayer, extraordinary provision, timely interventions. Think back and dwell on his goodness and faithfulness, reminding yourself and each other of the God for whom 'nothing is impossible'.*
- *Let those memories empower faith for the future. Bring some story of God's faithfulness to share on a Sunday morning, or in your Life Group. Let's help to strengthen the culture of faith and dependency on God by re-telling*

*our stories, just as Israel would whenever they saw the memorial at Gilgal.*

## notes

# DAY 3 – Wednesday 9 November

## Joshua 4:5

12 tribes, 12 stones. The point was - you are all in this together. Even those 2.5 tribes that had decided to make their homes to the East of Jordan were expected to assist in taking ground in the Promised Land to the West. That's the thing about the people of God - we are family, *one family*, an interdependent collective, not an association of independent individuals. Truth is, whatever challenges we face in 'taking ground', we're in it together! And better together too!

### ||| PRAYER POINTS |||

- *Thank God for the family of CoCoChu. Like any family, it's not perfect, because it's our family and we're not perfect!*
- *'Each of you must pick up one stone', said Joshua (4:5). We each have a part to play in taking ground, through participation in a Life Group, through prayer and service, through our giving - practically and financially. Ask yourself - am I carrying my 'stone'? And then ask God to*

*show you any new ways in which you might contribute to taking ground within the family of CoCoChu.*

- *Pray for growth in our love for one another as a church, and for effective unity and collaboration across the churches in the village.*
- *Think of a way to bless another member of his family - a word of encouragement, a small gift of love, an invitation to share a meal, a visit or prayer for someone in need. Be creative! Let's be those who lavish love on one another as the family of God at CoCoChu.*

## notes

# DAY 4 – Thursday 10 November

## Joshua 5:2

The wilderness generation had not been circumcised. Since Abraham (Genesis 17), circumcision had been the sign of God's covenant with his chosen people, a covenant that included the promise of a land - a place where God would bless them and make them a blessing. Before taking another step to possess that promised land, a new generation needed to renew their commitment to that covenant following the disobedience of the previous, wilderness generation (5:6).

### ||| PRAYER POINTS \\\

- *It is easy for us to feel 'disqualified' from God's blessing by previous failures. Israel had made some faithless and disobedient choices in the wilderness and had had to live with the consequences. But God's intention to bless them with a home and a heritage never changed. Praise God - when we are faithless, he remains faithful!*
- *Here at Gilgal, following the renewal of the covenant signified in circumcision, God 'rolls away' the shame of their past mistakes (5:9). To be free to take new ground, they needed to be free of old shame! If there are areas*

*of shame in your history that you have never brought to the light, now is the time to do it. Jesus is that light, and he will roll up and dispose of any shame. Nothing you have done, or failed to do, can make him love you any the less. So, receive his forgiveness and restoration today and lose that 'disqualified' tag for good!*

## notes

# DAY 5 – Friday 11 November

## Joshua 5:7-8

God's battle has always been with man's flesh. Adam's pride, Cain's envy, David's lust, Peter's bragging, James' and John's selfish ambition, Paul's intellect, etc. Flesh cannot inherit God's promises. Israel had to be convinced that they would never take ground through military prowess, gung-ho optimism or human cunning. The key to true strength is found in 'weakness'. The fighting force of Israel could hardly have felt more vulnerable than whilst waiting to heal from their circumcision wounds!

God sometimes needs to wound our strengths in order for us to rely on his. Only the 'weak' will take ground.

### PRAYER POINTS

- *Thank God in those times when he seems to frustrate our plans and hide his own plans - times when we can do nothing other than trust him, pray and wait! That's weakness!*
- *Thank God in circumstances when our own resources seem inadequate for the task he's called us to - when all*

*we can do is our best and trust him for the rest. That's weakness!*

- *Pray that as a church we will 'stand in his strength', conscious of our own weakness but confident in his power to bring to pass what he has promised to do.*
- *Times of testing purify our faith, like fire purifies gold (1 Peter 1:6-7). Impure, low carat gold, is brittle and unworkable. Pure, 24 carat gold is the goldsmith's delight - malleable and strong at the same time. God is after producing 24-carat faith in our hearts!*
- *Look at Paul - 2 Corinthians 12:8-10 - and, like him, let's learn to value weakness for 'when I am weak, then I am strong'!*

## notes

## DAY 6 – Monday 14 November

# Joshua 5:10

Circumcision was not the only thing that had lapsed during the years in the wilderness. So had Passover celebration, and this too was reinstated at Gilgal. Passover was instituted in order that Israel might remember and celebrate their deliverance from slavery in Egypt (Exodus 12), when the angel of death 'passed over' households protected by the blood of a sacrificial lamb, painted on the doorposts and lintel.

It was at Passover time in Jerusalem when God presented his own 'Lamb' (Jesus) as a sacrifice on a Roman cross. Through his poured-out blood, we too are delivered from slavery - not political oppression, but slavery to sin. We celebrate this every time we share 'communion' as his redeemed people.

The Cross and Resurrection are central to our faith. As Christians, our new identity is 'in Christ' - we died to sin's power and are raised to new life, *in Christ!* That's our standing - where God has placed each person who puts faith in Christ. We don't earn it or strive for it - God does it....phew! And it is only as we remain in him that we will 'take ground' (John15:4-5)

## ||| PRAYER POINTS |||

- *Thank God for new life in Christ! For forgiveness and for deliverance from sin's power. For clean consciences, healed hurts and eternal life.*
- *Pray that we can all keep central things central - who we are in Christ and the power of his life in us through the Holy Spirit.*
- *Remember that the Christian life is 'cross-shaped'. Pray that we will be faithful to God during times of temptation and struggle, willing to deny ourselves and take up our cross daily as his disciples (Luke 9:23)*
- *Pray for those who are suffering or facing struggles at the present - those you may know personally, and believers in countries where they are under persecution - that they might find comfort as they share in Christ's sufferings (Romans 8:17)*

notes

## DAY 7 – Tuesday 15 November

# Joshua 5:11-12

Joshua and the people are still camping at Gilgal. It's the day after Passover was reinstated and it proved to be another red-letter day. For the first time that almost anyone could remember, no manna appeared and it was never to be seen again. For 40 years, whilst they wandered, God had fed his people supernaturally, with 'manna from heaven' (see Exodus 16). Now it stopped. They had arrived in the land of promise and from now on they would need to glean, sow, harvest and store grain. Here was another object lesson - taking ground would mean taking responsibility. They must learn to know the ground - what it would produce, manage the ground - improve its yield, rest the ground - a sabbath principle. They must feed their families and also 'strangers and foreigners' coming among them - generosity was to be a characteristic of God's people (Deuteronomy 10:18-19).

### PRAYER POINTS

- *Thank God for work - it's a gift not a drudge! It's good to work hard, and good to rest also. Pray that God's people*

*will be known for their diligence and reliability. Pray too that we will know how to balance work and rest, to remain productive and avoid burnout.*

- *Pray that those who don't yet know God's love for them will touch something of his generosity through contact with his people in Colwall. Are there any ways in which you could show that generous love to a neighbour, even a stranger? Could you make them a meal, cut their lawn, do their shopping?*
- *In Matthew 4:4, Jesus says: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God'. Pray that God will give you a healthy appetite for his words! Ask him to help you understand the bible and commit to reading it regularly. There are lots of helpful aids out there; ask someone at church for some guidance in choosing a suitable one.*
- *Pray for those who plan and deliver the teaching in church, to all ages. Best way to learn is to teach - why not offer to assist with one of the children's' groups on a Sunday?*
- *Pray for the work of school and uni Christian unions, and for colleges like Regents in Malvern, who train pastors and youth workers.*

## notes

# DAY 8 – Wednesday 16

## November Joshua 5:13-14

The preparation period is coming to an end. Joshua is taking a good look at Jericho, the first city that will need to fall as the Israelites take ground. Suddenly, he is confronted by an armed man. 'Friend or foe?' challenges Joshua. 'Are you with us or against us?' 'Neither', comes the reply. 'I am the commander', says the man, 'and the force at my command is the Lord's army'. Joshua, the question is not 'am I with you?', but 'are you with me?' Let's just be clear about who's in command around here! And of what!

I love this cameo. The 'man' who appears to Joshua is Jesus (one of his OT appearances - a 'theophany' to give it its technical term). What a moment for Joshua - a reminder that the battle is the Lord's and he has unlimited, if unseen, resources at his command!

### ||| PRAYER POINTS |||

- *Thank God that 'the earth is the Lord's and everything in it' (Psalm 24:1). He is the rightful owner of the ground we seek to take. There is an imposter at work, a pretender*

to the Lord's throne in the hearts of men and women, boys and girls. But the rightful king is at work and his kingdom is advancing, one heart at a time. It is his work, accomplished by his Spirit. He's the one who breaks down the walls of resistance, bringing revelation to darkened minds. And we get to work with him! Let's pray for a fresh move of God's Spirit in Colwall, for fear, suspicion and ignorance to yield before the light and truth of the Gospel.

- Jesus needed to remind Joshua that, although he was leading the people, he was not the real boss! For each of us, daily surrender to our 'commander' - the Lord Jesus - is the only way to take ground, the only way to ensure victory over sin, the contagion of the secular world, and the ploys of the Devil. Let's renew that surrender today, and every day.
- Let's pray especially for those in leadership, that their confidence will be in the Lord, the commander of the hosts of heaven!

## notes

# DAY 9 – Thursday 17 November

## Joshua 5:14

'What do you want your servant to do?' This is such a key prayer. There were times, later in the campaign, when Joshua didn't ask the Lord for direction (see Joshua 9 - the Gibeonite deception), and it didn't work out well. The strategy for taking Jericho was successful, but who would have thought of it! Joshua received the plans 'with his face to the ground'. Can you imagine the faces of his senior military men when he told them the plan of action? You cannot be serious!

But God was indeed serious, and as long as they kept asking, kept listening and kept obeying what the Lord said, they prospered and ground was taken. Chapter 5 ends with the words: And Joshua did as he was told - you can read the outcome in Chapter 6.

### ||| PRAYER POINTS |||

- *Thank God that he is a speaking God. That he is pleased to reveal his will and his ways to those who will ask with humble and willing hearts.*

- *As we seek to take ground in Colwall, let's never outgrow the need to pray 'what would you have us do?'. Let's prioritise our prayer life, individually, as households and as a church together. Let's not allow prayer to be the Cinderella activity of the church - regularly ignored or overlooked.*
- *Ask God to show you ways to refresh your habit of prayer.*
- *Commit to at least one setting a week where you pray with others.*

## notes

# DAY 10 – Friday 18 November

## Joshua 5:15

Joshua worships in the shadow of Jericho's walls. There is no better preparation for battle than worship. (Read 2 Chronicles 20 for another, thrilling example)

Worship is for God - because he is worthy! It is our highest calling. The Westminster Confession put it this way: 'The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him for ever'. Worship also blesses the worshipper - it up-sizes God and downsizes problems. When we focus on the splendour of our God, his awesome power, his outrageous grace, his inexhaustible mercy and kindness - we are left feeling invincible in him no matter what the odds! (Romans 8:31-39)

### ||| PRAYER POINTS \\\

- *Worship is not limited to Sundays in church, or to singing. It's an attitude of heart that we can give expression to in any number of ways. Try taking an autumn walk, and worship the One who created seasons, trees and colours, eyes and noses to appreciate them, tongues to describe them and hands to paint them.*

- *Is there a 'Jericho' on your immediate horizon? Pause to worship rather than worry. The issue may not go away, but your perspective on it will change.*
- *Whatever stronghold may loom into view, determine that you will worship first, stilling your heart from fears and anxieties. God doesn't deliver us **from** our battles, he delivers us **in** them.*
- *Pray for those you know are facing crises of one sort or another. Pray they will discover God to be their champion.*

## notes

# DAY 11 – Monday 21 November

## Joshua 6:1

Joshua 6 starts with setting out what seems like an impossible position – the gates were securely barred and nothing was moving. There are times in our lives when we can feel like there is no way forward – it can very much feel like the gates are barred securely against us and the situations and circumstances that we need to see moving are not. There is no easy way through these times – the more we see God move in our lives the more we learn to trust Him - but there are still times when all we can do is stand there and wait (Ephesians 6:10-18). Remember the feeling of verse 1 because by the end of this week we will have reached verse 20 and a very different situation.

### ||| PRAYER POINTS |||

- *Faith is a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8). If you feel like you have little faith then ask your Father in Heaven to freely give you this gift.*
- *Faith the size of a mustard seed moves mountains (Matthew 17:20) so if you feel like you have little faith don't worry God makes it bigger! Ask Him for seeds.*

- *Ask the Holy Spirit to show you who to pray for faith for.*
- *You might have a tiny piece of faith but be confident in it – and when God gives you more mustard seeds of faith be willing to you receive them and pray that others will too.*

## notes

# DAY 12 – Tuesday 22 November

## Joshua 6:2-5

The Lord speaks – yesterday we left Joshua and the Israelites facing what seemed an impossible situation, today we hear the Lord speak into this situation. God gives Joshua a list of instructions and then clearly tells him what is going to happen if he follows these instructions – the walls will collapse and everyone will go straight in. The instructions seem odd – march, blow trumpets, shout – the challenge for Joshua is to trust that he has heard right, obey what he has heard and convince others that this is what they must do. We might long for God to speak into our situations, but this may not be the end of the challenge! (Acts 27:25 for example).

### PRAYER POINTS

- *Sometimes it is really hard to know if what you are hearing is God or your own thoughts and inclinations. This is ok, even the great prophet Elijah had to be taught how to hear God's voice (1 Kings 19:12). So ask God to teach you His voice.*
- *Spend some time this pray session listening!*

- *You can test what you are hearing against James 3:17.*
- *Think back to the times when God has guided you and thank Him for speaking.*

## notes

# DAY 13 – Wednesday 23

## November Joshua 6:6-7

How does Joshua respond to the challenge of hearing God yesterday? He gathers the priests and tells them what they must do. This takes real courage – remember he has been instructed not to be afraid and the people have said that they will follow him if he does not falter (Joshua 1:18). So, I imagine, with his heart somewhere near his mouth, he shares the plan with his team. We can imagine that he has tested what he has heard from God and then, convinced that he has heard right, Joshua is obedient to the voice he has heard. He has discharged a large part of his responsibility – it is up to God now!

### ||| PRAYER POINTS |||

- *Courage is a muscle that must be exercised if it is to grow. Ask God to give you opportunities to be courageous.*
- *Many Christians around the world face very frightening situations. You could try looking at Amnesty International's website or even just the news and then pray for three situations that touch you.*

- *Pray for those in authority over you (1 Tim 2:2) – they have tough decisions to make.*
- *Praise God that He is going to take our faith and work miracles with it!*

## notes

# DAY 14 – Thursday 24

## November Joshua 6:8-19

The situation seemed impossible, the Lord spoke, Joshua obeyed – now it is the turn of the people. There is a sense of unity of purpose as they trust God together to deliver Jericho into their hands. As they set out each morning it is no accident that the Ark of the Covenant, representing God's presence with them, goes first. When we are stepping out in faith, following what God has said to us, there is only one way to do it and that is with God at the head of what we are doing. If it takes a symbolic visual representation to remind us then so be it –the point is that if want our faith to bear fruit we must look first to God to lead us - not to ourselves or our own wisdom, or to the walls and barred gates, or to Joshua (or any other leaders), but to God! And when God has delivered on His promises let us not compromise ourselves with idols (such as pride and self-sufficiency) and not forget to give back from what we have received to Him!

## PRAYER POINTS

- *Pray for unity in the CoCoChu. God loves it when we work together and revival is always the result of prayer, unity and humility.*
- *Read 2 Chronicles 7:14 and really ask God to help you to live this out personally.*
- *Ask God to give you an opportunity today to bring this about in your own sphere of influence.*

## notes

# DAY 15 – Friday 25 November

## Joshua 6:20

On Monday we saw Joshua facing a seemingly impossible situation – a sombre place to be. Then God spoke and said what was going to happen if the people followed His instruction (verse 5 “have the whole army give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse and the army will go up, everyone straight in.” The people were faithful and now today we see the fruit of the faithfulness (v 20 “the men gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed; so everyone charged straight in, and they took the city” – exactly what God had said! It is time to remember... remember how it felt facing the barred gates, remember what God said and remember to return to Him a portion of what He has given us!

### ||| PRAYER POINTS \\\

- *Praise God with a shout! Literally give a shout (unless you are on the bus, in which case give a fist-pump)!*
- *Thank Him for doing exactly what He says He will.*
- *Ask Him to help you see what He has done – it might not look quite how you expected it to (Eph 3:20)*

- *Nothing makes a person happier than generosity – ask God to provide you with the opportunity to give, the courage to do it and the trust that He will not let you down. And then celebrate in the joy of giving!*

## notes



Colwall Community Church, Walwyn Road, Colwall, WR13 6QN

E: [office@colwallcommunitychurch.com](mailto:office@colwallcommunitychurch.com) / T: 07850 182106

W: [www.colwallcommunitychurch.com](http://www.colwallcommunitychurch.com)

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