

# As For Me and My House

Joshua 24:14-15

Tate Cox

Media Reference Number GSX832

Wednesday June 21, 2026

## Introduction:

It is always a privilege to be with you all, but today is a first for me. I haven't yet gotten to share with you guys on Father's Day before.

In light of me knowing that I was going to be teaching on Father's Day, I was seeking the Lord leading up to today and asking Him whether I should

1. Pray for dads prior to the teaching, as we just did, then get into a study that wasn't focused on fathers so much
2. Pray for dads and then get into a family-oriented study from the Word, with fathers being a focal point

Well, as you can likely tell from the title, the Lord led me to do the latter. And so, dads, this one's for us.

But maybe you're not a father today. Maybe you're a mother or a wife. I would encourage you not to tune out because I'm confident that God will also apply much truth to your heart if you have ears to hear what His Spirit would say to you through His Word.

If you're a husband or even a single man today, God would have you to receive this exhortation to prepare you to be the godly father that the woman He's called you to or will call you to will need one day.

And, needless to say, single women, you'd do well to listen too so that you may know the high standard of spiritual leadership that you should have towards a man that may seek to pursue you.

If you're not catching on, though this is indeed a family-oriented message with an emphasis on fathers, God has something for us ALL today in His incredible Word. So, let's read it and pray.

## Context:

It's certainly never a bad decision to take the time to examine the context surrounding a passage a Scripture. In fact, it is actually always a good idea because it serves to enhance our understanding of what's really being said and keep us on track in our theology.

**Illustration:** I'm sure we've all at some point dealt with someone taking our words out of context. There are a group of students from the youth ministry that have made quite the joke about taking my words out of context. "God loves feet" story.

Well, there's literally no one that gets their words taken more out of context than the Lord, both by deceitful unbelievers and uninformed believers.

And so, what's going on leading up to our text?

**Joshua 23:1**

<sup>1</sup> Now it came to pass, a long time after the Lord had given rest to Israel from all their enemies round about, that Joshua was old, advanced in age.

In just the chapter before our passage of study today, we're told that Israel is dwelling in peace after the many conquests of Joshua, through which the Lord gave His people the land He'd promised to them.

But now, Joshua is a very old man and is soon to die. Knowing that he is not long for this world, Joshua makes his final words mean something.

**Illustration:** Maybe you've gotten to spend time with someone in their final days/hours. The words that they say in those moments are words to hang onto.

So, how does Joshua utilize his final words? He does so by giving a very firm and bold exhortation to the leadership of God's people.

In the remainder of chapter 23, Joshua recounts to the people all that God had done for them and how faithful the Lord was.

**Joshua 23:14**

<sup>14</sup> "Behold, this day I *am* going the way of all the earth. And you know in all your hearts and in all your souls that not one thing has failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spoke concerning you. All have come to pass for you; not one word of them has failed.

**Application:** We ought to take so much heart in this today. God has made us good and precious promises in His Word, and not one of them will fail.

But, while Joshua reminds them of God's goodness, he also reminds them that they should be careful to be obedient to the commandments of God, lest His promised curses for disobedience come upon them.

In chapter 24, Joshua gives a brief history lesson to the people, with the focal point of his words being the faithfulness of God.

Joshua goes all the way back to God's calling of Abraham, to Jacob's sojourn to Egypt, to Israel's deliverance out of Egypt, to God's protection of His people on the other side of the Jordan, to Him giving the Promised Land to them through the conquests.

But what's the point in Joshua doing this? Why is he bothering to utilize his final words this way? It was so that the people would not forget how good and faithful God had been to them.

**Application:** The Lord knows that we are prone to forget what He's done in our lives in the past. For this reason, we must be diligent to remind ourselves and not let ourselves forget!

**Psalm 111:4**

<sup>4</sup> He has made His wonderful works to be remembered;  
The Lord *is* gracious and full of compassion.

**"wonderful works"** = marvelous events, miracles

When the Lord works in a wonderful way in your life, don't let yourself ever forget it. Remind yourself of it often. Make a notebook called "the wonderful works of God in my life", write down what He's done, and don't let your forgetful soul delete it from your memory.

Remembering His past faithfulness and goodness will be needed when you're going through new trials and testing.

In the Bible, parents are commanded to continually tell their children of the wonderful works of God.

**Psalm 78:4–7**

<sup>4</sup> We will not hide *them* from their children,  
Telling to the generation to come the praises of the Lord,  
And His strength and His wonderful works that He has done.  
<sup>5</sup> For He established a testimony in Jacob,  
And appointed a law in Israel,  
Which He commanded our fathers,  
That they should make them known to their children;  
<sup>6</sup> That the generation to come might know *them*,  
The children *who* would be born,  
*That* they may arise and declare *them* to their children,  
<sup>7</sup> That they may set their hope in God,  
And not forget the works of God,  
But keep His commandments;

And so, after having just reminded the people of God's wonderful works and faithfulness, Joshua then utters the words which we will now consider as our main passage today.

## 1. Three Weighty Commands (vs 14)

*<sup>14</sup> “Now therefore, fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord!”*

“now therefore” = considering how good and faithful God has been to you, do this!

“Fidelity to Yahweh is but the natural contemporary response to his abundant historical goodness. What else could one do toward a God who calls, delivers, protects, and supplies? There is a compulsion about it. It is the only reasonable response to the overwhelming waves of Yahweh’s mercies.” – **Dale Ralph Davis**

And so, the three weighty commands that Joshua gives to the people are:

1. Fear the Lord
2. Serve Him
3. Put away the gods which your fathers served

### **A. Fear the Lord**

If you you’ve been around the Scriptures for a little while, I’m certain you’ve read this command. Actually, it is one of the most repeated commands in the entire Bible: hundreds of times in both the OT and NT. Needless to say, this is something to make sure we get right.

Contrary to what it may sound like at first, fearing the Lord is not about you being terrified of God.

“**fear**” – to regard with feelings of respect and reverence; to consider hallowed and exalted; to be in awe of

Fearing the Lord is all about being in awe of God’s power and position. This should be the response of all who consider the greatness of God (that He’s all-powerful, eternal, all-knowing, matchless, sovereign, and so much more).

If you’re thinking about God accurately, as His Word describes Him, you should be left with a “woah” type of response that is rooted in a deep respect and reverence for Him.

But the fear of the Lord actually causes you to fundamentally change as a person. When you possess this fear of the Lord and walk in it, there are amazing practical effects that you experience.

For instance, fearing the Lord is the starting point to knowledge and wisdom.

**Proverbs 1:7, 9:10**

<sup>7</sup> The fear of the Lord *is* the beginning of knowledge,  
*But* fools despise wisdom and instruction.

<sup>10</sup> “The fear of the Lord *is* the beginning of wisdom,  
 And the knowledge of the Holy One *is* understanding.”

You’ll never arrive at the point of wisdom if you do not properly regard God for who He is and live in awe of Him.

The fear of the Lord also causes you to depart from sin and evil.

**Proverbs 16:6b**

And by the fear of the Lord *one* departs from evil.

**Job 28:28**

<sup>28</sup> And to man He said,  
 ‘Behold, the fear of the Lord, that *is* wisdom,  
 And to depart from evil *is* understanding.’ ”

How exactly does the fear of the Lord cause us to depart from sin though? I believe that Joseph, from the book of Genesis, shows us exactly how.

**Genesis 39:6–10**

<sup>6</sup> Thus he left all that he had in Joseph’s hand, and he did not know what he had except for the bread which he ate.

Now Joseph was handsome in form and appearance.

<sup>7</sup> And it came to pass after these things that his master’s wife cast longing eyes on Joseph, and she said, “Lie with me.”

<sup>8</sup> But he refused and said to his master’s wife, “Look, my master does not know what *is* with me in the house, and he has committed all that he has to my hand. <sup>9</sup> *There is* no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you *are* his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”

<sup>10</sup> So it was, as she spoke to Joseph day by day, that he did not heed her, to lie with her *or* to be with her.

Joseph, being tempted repeatedly by Potiphar’s wife (who would have been an incredibly beautiful woman), refused to commit sexual immorality with her.

But his reasoning why is to be noted and admired. Joseph understood that if he were to give into this temptation to sin, he’d be sinning against the Lord. He essentially says, “how could I possibly do this to God?”. We’d do well to ask that same question to ourselves when tempted to sin against the Lord.

Someone can only utter those words and live this way if they have a deep fear of the Lord.

Fearing the Lord manifests itself through obedience to the Lord. If you fear Him, you're going to obey Him.

**Ecclesiastes 12:13**

<sup>13</sup> Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter:  
Fear God and keep His commandments,  
For this is man's all.

**B. Serve the Lord**

The second weighty command that Joshua gives to the people is actually the main thrust of our entire passage today. Serving the Lord is mentioned 4 times in our 2 verses.

“**serve**” – to work for; to labor for; to minister; *to worship through service*

Now, if you hear this word or that definition and you think, “So God just wants me to work for Him then, is that right? He just wants to use me and abuse me?”, well, my friend, you have it all wrong.

Here's the thing, it is easy to want to serve Him when you consider all that He's done for you. Consider your salvation in Christ and all that He did to make a way for you to go to heaven, and you'll quickly want to give your life back to Him in His service.

**Romans 12:1**

<sup>1</sup> I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is your reasonable service*.

We are to give our lives back to Him as acts of worship because it's the only reasonable response to the great things He's done for us!

“Live for Him because He died for you”

So, what does it practically look like to serve the Lord? I believe that is an important question that demands an answer.

Certainly, serving the Lord could look like serving within the church in some capacity, but it is not at all limited to that.

A practical way of thinking about what it means to serve the Lord is devoting your time, energy, and resources to the plans and purposes of God in this world.

Serving the Lord looks like serving others, just as Jesus commanded us to do...

**John 13:12–17**

<sup>12</sup> So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? <sup>13</sup> You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. <sup>14</sup> If I then, *your* Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. <sup>15</sup> For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. <sup>16</sup> Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. <sup>17</sup> If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

But we are told in our text that we are to serve the Lord in *sincerity* and *truth*. It is possible to do what looks like “serving the Lord” but do it from a place where your motives are far from sincere and pure.

The Pharisees were prime examples of this. They did religious things that looked so good, but they did it to be seen by men, and so the public recognition they received was their reward; they received no reward from God.

But, when we do serve the Lord with the right motives, God promises to reward us, both in this life and the life to come.

**C. Put Away Sin**

So, even after all the incredible things that the Lord had done for them, Israel was still guilty of worshipping false gods.

**Application:** how tragic it is that even after all the Lord has done for us, we still sin against Him; and yet we’re all guilty of this

Joshua, on his final day, with his final words, charges the people to put away their idols so that they may be a holy people who served the Lord alone.

“**put away**” – to remove; to turn way from; to depose (remove from a throne, to take away one’s power and position)

**Application:** I personally love that last way of thinking about this term “put away”. It makes me want to examine myself and ask “Who is on the throne of my life? Is it my sinful flesh or is it the Lord?”. Anything or anyone that’s on the throne of your life that isn’t the Lord is an idol/false god that is to be DEPOSED.

“If Joshua were speaking to us today, he would challenge us to forsake the gods of contemporary society: money, sensual pleasure, and self-absorption. These are the gods who bid for our souls. –  
**Dr. Erwin Lutzer**

Why is this so important? Why must we put away the idols that we worship? Well, the Scriptures tell us plainly that the Lord is a jealous God.

**Exodus 34:14**

<sup>14</sup> (for you shall worship no other god, for the Lord, whose name *is* Jealous, *is* a jealous God),

We tend to mistakenly always see jealousy as a bad thing, but there is a sanctified form of it that is good. God does not want us to worship false gods because He desires our undivided love and loyalty.

God does not want just part of you. He doesn't want your devotion to be divided between Him and someone/something else. God wants ALL of you.

We cannot have both sin and God. You can have sin if you want it. You can have God if you want Him. But you cannot have loyalty to both.

**Matthew 6:24**

<sup>24</sup> "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

**Application:** "who am I serving?"; Self or Savior?

Joshua give this command to Israel because they could not have both their false gods and the Lord God, so they had to make a choice.

**2. The Choice is Yours (vs 15a)**

*<sup>15</sup> And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell.*

Joshua here puts the ball in their court and challenges them to step up and do one thing: CHOOSE.

Joshua says, "if it seems evil to you" which is essentially him saying to them "if, in your judgement, this is a displeasing thing".

**"choose"** – to make a decision; to select an alternative over another

We are very familiar with the act of making a choice. We make choices all the time, each and every day. Researchers in psychology estimate that the average adult makes roughly 35,000 decisions a day (what to eat, wear, say, etc.).

We have this ability to make choices due to the way that God has designed us. When God made humanity, He gave us agency (what is known as free will).

We can see this all the way back in the Garden of Eden. God put the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden, within the reach of Adam and Eve, because He gave them the gift of free will. If there was no alternative to obeying God, then He made them to be pre-programmed robots. If there was not a forbidden fruit, there was not truly free will.

Contrary to what some say, being saved requires you to utilize your free will that God has given you. But the same is true of being condemned. Both are choices that are made in response to what God has done.

You can either utilize your God-given agency to receive the gift of salvation in Christ, or to reject it. Those who are both in heaven and hell used their free will to get there by what they chose to do with what Jesus did.

And so, Joshua is charging the people to make a choice to either serve the false gods that their fathers served or to serve the Lord.

It's as though he's saying to them, "Nobody's got a gun to your head/sword to your throat forcing you to choose one way or the other! Choose for yourself!".

**Application:** Now, I want to linger on "the gods of your fathers" for a moment. I believe there is some application that is worth us considering here.

In a lot of ways, our upbringings shape us into who we are, whether that be for better or for worse.

If you grew up in a household where anger was on display quite often, you likely have a tendency toward getting angrier than most.

If you grew up in a household where addictive behaviors (alcohol/drugs, sexual) were on display, you likely have tendencies toward addictive behaviors.

And we could say more, but we must understand that these are not excuses to continue in the sins that you saw in your formative years. Our upbringings definitely shape us, but they do not *define* us.

It only takes one father, mother, man, or woman to say NO MORE and, through the power of God, break the generational cycle of sin that has existed!

**Illustration:** take one step forward if your dad \_\_\_\_\_ (was at your graduation, took you to the park, has never hit you, etc.)

I'm not sure about you, but I have known men who were horribly abused who decided to be different and are now some of the most loving fathers in the world.

Joshua is essentially offering a challenge to the people of Israel. He is saying, “Hey! If you want to continue in the sins of your fathers, go right ahead. BUT, if you want to break the cycle, be different, and serve the Lord with all you have, then make your choice and let’s do it!”.

### 3. Stand, For Yourself and Your Family (vs 15b)

*But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

Here is where, we as parents, and in particular, we as fathers, should be challenged and exhorted.

I would imagine that you have likely seen these words that we just read on a sign of some sort as a piece of home décor.

**Engagement:** just out of curiosity, how many of you have this verse somewhere in your home?

Well, here’s the thing, this is not simply a catchy slogan to hang in your kitchen, it’s something to practically live out!

Joshua has just given a serious charge to the people, demanding that they choose for themselves who’d they’d serve. And then he goes on to share with them about the choice that he was making/the stand that he was taking.

“The tense Joshua used implied more than a once-for-all choosing. The tense involves what grammarians call continuous action. That is, it involves the past, but it also involves the present and the future. It is as if Joshua had said, ‘I have chosen to serve the Lord; I am choosing that same path of service now; and I will go on choosing to serve God until the very end.’ This was the character of Joshua. He chose, and he chose, and he chose, and he kept right on choosing. He understood the dynamics of choice—once-for-all choice and existential choice as well. Thus his word to the people was not an affirmation puffed up on the spur of the moment. It was deeply imbedded in Joshua’s comprehension of what is required of a person made in the image of God, one called upon not to obey God like a machine or an animal, but to obey God by choice.” – **Francis Schaeffer**

We should take careful note of the order of Joshua’s words. He does not say “as for my house and me”, but rather “as for me and my house”. This is undeniably significant.

Joshua does indeed speak on behalf of his family choosing to serve the Lord, but he knew it started with him first and foremost.

**Application:** Here is where I want to really speak to the fathers specifically today. Gentlemen, we are commanded by God in His Word to LEAD our families. You may not want that responsibility, but you have it nonetheless; there is no opting out of it!

This means that we are called to protect our family, provide for our family, but it also means that we are the priest of our household!

Your family's physical welfare should be a priority to you, no doubt. But your family's spiritual welfare should be your chief priority! Biblically speaking, the father is to set the tone for his family's spiritual health.

It's not at all an exaggeration to say that the most important thing you can be doing with your life right now is spiritually leading your family. You don't need to get involved in another ministry, you need to focus on your FIRST ministry, which is your household.

The career you have is not more important, the hobby you have is not more important. Nothing is more important than this.

But just like how Joshua described it, we cannot spiritually lead our families if we are not leading from out in front. Dads, we are called to lead by example, not from a standpoint of "do as I say and not as I do". If you don't live what you preach, your kids won't buy it, they'll see right through it.

Every man should be able to say these words to their children...

**1 Corinthians 11:1**

<sup>1</sup> Imitate me, just as I also *imitate* Christ.

Children are prone to imitate/copy. This is how God has made them.

**Ephesians 5:1**

<sup>1</sup> Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.

**Illustration:** I intentionally spend time with the Lord with my daughter around. I've seen that, without me prompting her to do so, she will go find her Bible and begin to read it because she wants to imitate her Daddy.

For this reason, we ought to be so incredibly mindful of the example we are setting for our children whom the Lord given to us.

If you want your children to follow Jesus and serve Him, don't just tell them to do so, SHOW THEM HOW!

"Discipleship is caught, not taught"

It is a tragedy that far too many fathers don't bother to concern themselves with these things. Most fathers are very dedicated to providing for their family and protecting their family, and that is obviously great.

But where are the dads that are taking God's call seriously to labor to make sure their family is doing well spiritually?

The other youth pastors and I agree that upwards of 90% of our Biblical guidance sessions that we have with students are as a result of the failures of that child's father. And I do not delight in saying that one bit.

Dads, we are called to *steward* our family. This word steward has to do with how God has entrusted things into our care and management. It's the equivalent of God saying "here are these precious souls that I care about immensely. Take care of them".

Those are weighty words to consider, but they really serve to put things into the proper perspective.

Our wives and children are certainly still going to be accountable to God for their choices. But what is also true is that we, as fathers, will be accountable to God for how we led them.

I don't think it is far-fetched to think that the Lord may ask us questions like this when we stand before Him one day:

- Did you, through leading by example, set your children up for success spiritually? Or did you fail to give them an example worth following and thereby set them up to fail?
- Did you bother to open My Word to them and instruct them in it?
- Did you care more about your family's spiritual health than your golf/pickleball game?
  - I use these two hobbies because they are my main two hobbies
- Did you show them how to pray to Me?
- Did you show them what surrendered worship looked like? Or were you too concerned with how you looked that you never bothered to sing to Me around them?

There are countless questions such as these that we could consider, but hopefully we are all getting the point.

#### **Proverbs 22:6**

<sup>6</sup> Train up a child in the way he should go,  
And when he is old he will not depart from it.

Children need to be trained up, and they need this training first and foremost from their father.

**Ephesians 6:4**

<sup>4</sup> And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.

**Conclusion:**

The last thing I would want for any father today would be the last thing God would want for you today: to feel shame because of your shortcomings.

Instead, the right thing to feel would be a holy conviction which then energizes you to do better than you have in the past.

It is never too late to step up to the plate and walk in the calling God has for you as a father. Maybe you've made plenty of mistakes. Well, it's time to start fixing them one by one. Just like a big ship takes a while to turn around, so it may take some time to get things right with your family, but it's never too late.

You and I as fathers rising to the occasion and leading our family in serving the Lord is a decision that can have a generational impact that we may never get to see.

Just the other day I saw a short yet powerful video on Instagram that I wanted to share with you fellow dads about how important it is to concern yourself with your family's spiritual welfare and how that's a legacy worth leaving.

**CUE VIDEO**

What that 101-year-old man, who was a WWII vet, was most proud of in his entire life was that all of his children were Christians, all of his grandchildren were Christians, and the great-grandchildren that were old enough to understand the Gospel and respond to it were Christians too.

That right there is a legacy that every father should strive for.

*“As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord”*

*I say that on behalf of myself, but what about you? What will you do?*

**PRAY**