

Series: STRONG: Four Forgotten Truths about God's People
from the Book of Joshua; *Sermon:* **You Must Make a Choice**
Delivered by Josh Moody, senior pastor, on February 2, 2020

Bible text explored: Joshua 24:14-25

¹⁴“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. ¹⁵And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”

¹⁶Then the people answered, “Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods, ¹⁷for it is the LORD our God who brought us and our fathers up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, and who did those great signs in our sight and preserved us in all the way that we went, and among all the peoples through whom we passed. ¹⁸And the LORD drove out before us all the peoples, the Amorites who lived in the land. Therefore we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God.”

¹⁹But Joshua said to the people, “You are not able to serve the LORD, for he is a holy God. He is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. ²⁰If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then he will turn and do you harm and consume you, after having done you good.” ²¹And the people said to Joshua, “No, but we will serve the LORD.” ²²Then Joshua said to the people, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen the LORD, to serve him.” And they said, “We are witnesses.” ²³He said, “Then put away the foreign gods that are among you, and incline your heart to the LORD, the God of Israel.” ²⁴And the people said to Joshua, “The LORD our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey.” ²⁵So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and put in place statutes and rules for them at Shechem. ²⁶And Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God. And he took a large stone and set it up there under the terebinth that was by the sanctuary of the LORD. ²⁷And Joshua said to all the people, “Behold, this stone shall be a witness against us, for it has heard all the words of the LORD that he spoke to us. Therefore it shall be a witness against you, lest you deal falsely with your God.” ²⁸ So Joshua sent the people away, every man to his inheritance. [ESV]

Review and application:

1. Why (*Josh 24:1*) was Shechem the place to which Joshua summoned Israel's leaders to review God's faithfulness and to renew their covenant with him? (See *Gen. 12:6-7*.)
2. “The human heart,” Pastor Moody observed, “is an idol factory. Name some “gods” or “idols” that our culture follows.

We tend to think, as claimed in the Henley poem Invictus, that “I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul” . . . free to choose a course to follow from an array of options. But the Bible limits our choice to what kind of God we will serve.

3. The way the word *serve* or *served* is used in today's passage carries the sense of *worship*. Count how many times it is repeated.

4. Allegiance to what gods beside the LORD (*vv. 14-15a*) had tugged at God's chosen people?
What singular and unshakeable commitment (*v. 15b*) did Joshua assert?
How should examples we have encountered affirm our choice?
(e.g., Jim Elliot, Billy Graham, Todd Beamer, and Andrew Brunson.)
5. What was positive (*vv. 16-18*) about how the people answered Joshua's challenge?
What two aspects of God's character (*vv. 19-20*) made Joshua challenge the adequacy of their commitment?
What (*vv. 21-24*) must they completely abandon, and what fully embrace?
6. Why (*v. 15*) did Joshua call for an immediate response?
What is the danger of putting off a crucial choice?
7. What tools (*vv. 25-27*) did Joshua use to make the people's decision tangible? What are rough equivalents for us?
 - Cutting a covenant / observing the Lord's Supper
 - Making a written record / reading God's Word
 - Erecting a memorial stone / a worship space
8. Why is remembering so important? (See *Josh. 24:31* and *Judg. 2:10*.)