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Swift Creek Baptist Church (swiftcreekbaptistchurch.com)  
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## Joshua 24:14-15 “As for Me and My House”

Intro. Our lives are full of situations in which we must make a decision. Have you ever stood in front of that counter at Baskin Robbins ice cream shop? They say they have 31 flavors from which to choose. No one should be faced with such a difficult decision as that! I know there are many more difficult and important choices than that in this world. We just read about the most important choice that anyone could ever make, whether to serve the Lord or not. Joshua gathered the people at Shechem (v.1) and put before the people two basic choices and it was up to them to make up their mind which course of action they would follow. Joshua’s call for the people to make a choice was very timely. Joshua realized that he would soon die. So he gave a very powerful farewell speech. It was a reminder of God’s blessings, and a warning of the consequences of making the wrong choice. He challenged them to choose the Lord instead of other gods and stay true to Him.

Things really haven’t changed much since Joshua’s day. We still are faced with the same decision. Each one of you must decide for him or herself whether or not you will believe in the Lord, follow Him, and serve Him. No decision is more important than making the choice to follow Jesus. Perhaps it’s time for some here today to make up your mind who you are going to serve.

Now to help you make the right choice, let’s consider more closely this issue this morning. And since this is Father’s Day, I will make some important application to the role of fathers in helping your families make the right choice as well. There are two main points I want to make from this text of Scripture. First, we should choose the Lord God over other gods and religions, and secondly, we should not just believe in the Lord but also serve the Lord. The two go hand-in-hand. So first of all, consider with me:

### I. THE SPIRITUAL CHOICE A FATHER SHOULD MAKE

To make the right choice, this means that you need to:

A. Recognize the Basis of this Choice – After God tells them through Joshua all His saving work for them in vv.2-13, Joshua says in v.14, “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!” The key word is “therefore.” In light of what God had done for them, He certainly had the right to demand their exclusive loyalty and service. Thus, after instructing the people, Joshua calls for a decision. It’s time to put away other gods and serve the one true God exclusively!

Even so, He who made us ought to be worshipped and served. Yet God is not only your Creator, but He sent His Son Jesus to die for your sins. Therefore, He deserves to be not only your Savior, but also your Lord. He deserves your complete and undivided devotion.

B. Recognize the Need to Make a Choice – If you do not make the right spiritual choice, you are making the wrong choice. It’s that simple. There is no middle ground. Joshua knew that some of the people, while outwardly serving the Lord, were secretly worshipping the ancient idols of their Mesopotamian fathers. Some of them also harbored some of the Egyptian gods.<sup>1</sup> Some privately

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<sup>1</sup> See Lev. 17:7 (goat idols) and Deut. 32:16-17 (demon gods).

kept these graven images, which came to their hands from their ancestors. Now that they had arrived in a new land, they would be tempted to worship the gods of the Amorites (v.8). Too many were trying to worship both the Lord God and false gods. They had to make a choice and they couldn't have it both ways.

Likewise, Jesus said in Mt. 6:24, "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."

Today, few seek to worship images as gods, but we still have a big problem with many who want both God and the things of this world. They want Christ and the pleasures of sin. We are tempted to follow the ways of the world, even though such ways are contrary to the ways of God. So you need to make a choice.

Thus, we also see from our text that:

C. A Choice Is Demanded - Joshua could not endure double-mindedness, and therefore he pushed the people to decision, urging them to serve the Lord "in sincerity and in truth."<sup>2</sup> The word translated "sincerity" means "wholeness." They were to wholly serve the Lord and not be divided in their loyalties. They were to serve the Lord in truth and not in pretense. Thus, if they did so, they would put away altogether all their graven images. Anticipating the cry of Elijah upon Mt. Carmel, he demanded in effect, "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD [is] God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." (1 Kings 18:21). He demanded a decision, and rightly so, and yet the people hesitated. Who dares to be neutral in the battle between truth and a lie? How can you seek to be neutral between God and the devil, and between sin and righteousness? Remember that to be between the two is, after all utterly impossible. Repent of your double-mindedness, and turn unto the Lord with purpose of heart. James 4:8 says, "Cleanse *your* hands, *you* sinners; and purify *your* hearts, *you* double-minded." Spiritually, you can't have it both ways. You have to make a choice.

Yet we live in a society that has rejected absolute truth. They say everything is relative. You can have it this way or that way. There is not a right or wrong choice, but it is perfectly fine to choose whatever you want.

That's not what the Bible teaches! It is wrong for a man to insinuate that he really is not called upon to decide, and that he may take up a position midway between the two. Need I remind you of what our Lord said in Revelation 3? To the church of Laodicea He said, "I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth." Who is this offensive one? He is neither in hot pursuit of Christ nor is he cold toward Christ. He is just a moderate, easygoing person, who is lukewarm. Yes, and Christ said He loathed him. I do not read of His spewing anything out of His mouth except such a person. This He cannot bear.

But having said that, the choice of the Lord is never forced on anyone. Joshua even told them their options. God wants us to serve Him from a free will.

D. Make a Firm Commitment to the Lord - There was no question where Joshua stood on the issue. Listen to Joshua's firm resolve when he says in the last of v.15, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." He speaks as one who has weighed the matter, counted the cost, and come to a decision which he can defend against all attacks. It would be idle to try and shake his resolve. It is as stable as a rock. He will keep on serving the Lord in spite of the influence of crowds, and in spite of temptations and trials. Such ought to be the decision of every one of us, and I earnestly wish that so it were.

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<sup>2</sup> The NIV combine both terms into "faithfulness."

Listen, to be blessed fully by the Lord, we must *fully* give ourselves to the Lord, as Joshua said in v.14. To enjoy Christianity, you must plunge into it.

The great preacher Charles Spurgeon told the story of a gentleman who was invited into an orchard to taste his apples. “No,” he said, “I would rather not,” and being asked often to come and partake, and yet refusing, the other said, “I guess you have a prejudice against my apples.” “Yes,” said the man, “I have tasted a few of them and they are very sour.” “But which,” said he, “did you taste?” “Why, those apples which fall into the road over the hedge.” “Ah, yes,” said the owner, “They are as sour as crab apples. I planted them for the good of the boys, but if you come into the middle of the orchard, you will find a different flavor”; and it was so.

Now, just round the border or entrance of our Christian faith, along the outer hedge there are some very sour apples of conviction, self-denial, humility, and trials, planted on purpose to keep off hypocrites and mere professors; but in the midst of the garden are luscious fruits, mellow to the taste, and sweet as nectar. Even so, the nearer to God, the sweeter the joy. If you are a Christian, *be* a Christian. If you serve the Lord, serve Him with your whole heart and soul and strength. That is the pathway of the greatest blessing.

E. We Should Set a Personal Example in Making a Choice - To motivate them to avow *their* decision, he declared his own. He cries, “You may hesitate, but my mind is made up once for all.” A man’s own personal example is eloquent beyond the power of words. In all times it is imperative upon men to take their stand for God and truth. He was willing to move ahead of his people and commit himself, regardless of the people’s inclinations.

His words were not just an empty boast because the people knew his past choices. He had always been a man of firm step and determined mind. Not long after the crossing of the Red Sea, Joshua had stood as the general against the Amalekites (Ex. 17:9-13). When the people worshiped the golden calf, Joshua, by choice, did not identify with them (Ex. 32:17ff). His firmness comes out very clearly in his conduct as one of the twelve spies. The others brought up an evil report of the land, but not so Joshua and Caleb; though they were only two against ten, yet they maintained their testimony boldly, and when the people spoke of stoning them, they did not falter for an instant, but remained faithful to their consciences. He stood with Caleb against his own people when they were wrong. He chose to affirm that God’s Word was true and that they could conquer the land. Joshua, like his friend Caleb, “followed the Lord fully.” He belonged to the Lord, heart and soul, and mind, and strength. As the successor of Moses, and the type of the Lord Jesus, he put on zeal as a cloak, and fidelity as a garment. That was the pattern of his life.

The Bible gives other examples of faithful believers who made the right choice. In fact, each age had men and women whose hearts were fixed, trusting in the Lord to serve as a landmark for weaker saints to steer by. Enoch, when all others walked according to the course of this evil world, dared to be singular, and walked with God. Noah believed God amid universal wickedness, and persevered for long years in preparing the ark, though all men mocked his warnings. Abraham forsook country and home at the command of God, and became a pilgrim and a stranger, dwelling alone and not numbered among the sinful, idol-worshipping peoples, but worshipped God faithfully. Look at Moses, counting the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt. How firmly did he adhere to right and truth so that he was faithful to God in all his house. The three Hebrew Youths also are before us defying the devouring flames of the furnace rather than bow before Nebuehadnezer’s golden image. In later years Daniel is the grand type of decision as we see him opening his window, and praying, as before, though he knows that the doom of death hangs over him. In New Testament times John the Baptist rises to the front rank by his resolute fidelity, and Pilate sinks to eternal shame by reason of his vacillation, who asked the crowd to make the

decision for him. Paul is covered with renown, while Agrippa, who was “almost persuaded,” never became a Christian.

Today the same firmness is needed. We too must take our stand, and, taking it, must hold it as though we were rooted to the ground. Have you chosen to believe in Christ and follow Him wholeheartedly, regardless of what others do? We must be willing to swim against the stream, and not do as most do, but as the best do. We must forsake the broad road with its many travelers that leads to destruction and instead walk in the narrow way which leads unto life.

F. Our Choice Should Influence Family and Others - That resolve on the part of Joshua was openly avowed. Furthermore, he was able to speak for his house as well as for himself. Yet many fathers have not openly declared their allegiance to the Lord, and so they do not have the right kind of influence on their families. Joshua’s faith and commitment were so intense that he set his sons burning with the same flame. May God give us more spiritual vitality so that we shall influence our children and grandchildren.

The strongest influence in a person’s life is that of our parents. Parents have a great influence on the way we think, talk, and behave. This CAN BE GOOD. It also CAN BE BAD. It depends on the parents.

Parents have to always keep in mind, as they raise their children, that their children will do, not just as they SAY, but AS THEY DO. Suppose dad gets up on Sunday morning and yields to the temptation not to go to church. In most cases he has not just decided for himself; he has decided for his whole family. Nevertheless, there are a good many wives who will round the children up and take them on to church. Make no mistake about it; many adults today do what they do because that is what their parents did. Joshua reminded the people of Israel that *their* “fathers” had set a bad example for them in following other gods. So we are responsible for making the right decision about God and Christ regardless of what our parents do.

I am blessed with a multi-generational Christian commitment to God. My great-great grandfather, Stephen Felker, said, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” He was an active member of the First Baptist Church of Monroe, GA. His children, including my great grandfather, did the same. So my grandfather Felker became a believer and worshiped and served the Lord. My father grew up in church and attended his whole life, serving as a S.S. teacher, elder, and in other capacities. There was never any question where we would be on Sunday morning. My father led us to church. Therefore, I grew up in church and became a believer, and I was even called to preach. Cheryl and I raised our boys in church and taught them the ways of the Lord. For generations, the Felker family has said, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

Joshua also influenced his nation. Look at the people’s positive response in vv.16-18. After affirming what God had done for them, they said in the last of v.18, “Therefore we also will serve the LORD, for he is our God.” Then look down at v.31, “Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had known all the works of the LORD which He had done for Israel.”

So what kind of spiritual influence are you having? What can be the influence of a decision that is altogether secret? Your choice of the Lord is very questionable if you do not dare to declare that you are on the Lord’s side. Dad, if you profess your faith in Christ, it is much more likely that your children will as well. If someone professes Christ today in this church service, you just might influence someone else to do the same! The devil has plenty of people influencing others for bad. It’s time for God’s people to stand up for God and be a positive influence on others.

Finally, we see from our text:

## II. THE SERVICE A FATHER AND HIS FAMILY SHOULD RENDER

Twice in v.14 Joshua told the people they should serve the Lord. Then he said in the last of v.15, "...as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." The word translated "serve" (*'abad*) is the most common word for service or work rendered for someone. That would include the service of worship (22:27; Ex. 20:5) and the service of obedience (24:24). Joshua served the Lord as the primary leader of Israel, both in battle and the administration of the nation. Now notice with me:

A. The Performance of His Service - In Joshua's case his resolve was not only openly avowed, but earnestly carried out. He understood that believing in the Lord and choosing Him also means that He is to be served. ★ A profession of faith without the service of faith is an empty faith. Can you choose Christ as Savior, but not obey Him as Lord? I think not.

But too many are not at all like Joshua. They have avowed themselves on the Lord's side, and yet they do not serve the Lord; their names are down in the church book, and they attend to the outward ordinances, but as for any serving the Lord, you will find little to no service to the Lord. Their religion only gets their spare time. They do something for the church of God when they have nothing else more "important" to do. Some Christians suppose the Lord Jesus Christ, having the distinguished honor of having their names in His church book, is perfectly satisfied, though they do nothing.

Do you serve the Lord through your local church. Jesus said in Mt. 9:37, "The harvest truly *is* plentiful, but the laborers *are* few." I'm sure this church needs your service. Be willing to volunteer. I want to commend those who served in Vacation Bible School.

B. The Leadership of His Service - Notice, Joshua was of the persuasion that he was the man of the house, the leader of his home. When he spoke, he spoke for his family. Did you know this is Scriptural? Ephesians 5:23 says, "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church..." There is so much turmoil today because of the absence of spiritual leadership in the homes across America. Too few dads are like Joshua. There is no leadership in the home—everyone wants to think he is equal. This leads to confusion. Paul wrote to the Corinthians about God's chain of command. In I Cor. 11:3, he wrote, "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman (or wife) is the man; and the head of Christ is God." [Or just paraphrase in logical order]. A Christian wife obeys God when she recognizes her husband's leadership. America is in spiritual decline partly because we do not have enough men like Joshua as heads of our families. Too often the father is even absent from the home.

Men, Christian fathers, it's past time for us to accept and affirm the spiritual leadership that God expects of us! Now we cannot, and we should not *force* anyone to become a Christian. Every person must make their own choice to trust in Christ. Thus, even the best of fathers *can* have a child that will refuse to follow Christ.<sup>3</sup> But we can say to our children, "While you live under my roof, my family is going to church!" It's time for Christian fathers to say to their children, "We will not have any of the devil's music, videos, games or clothing in our home!" This is a *Christian* home. Fathers, if you do not claim your children for Christ, you can be sure that the devil and the world will!

Finally, let us see:

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<sup>3</sup> Isaac had his Esau. Many of Jacob's sons were ungodly and even plotted to murder their brother. Eli's sons did not follow his faith (1 Samuel 2:22-24, 25b). Samuel's sons also did not follow God as their father did. David had his Absalom, and other sons did not follow David's example. Furthermore, if election to salvation is unconditional, and whether the child becomes Christian is ultimately God's choice.

C. The Inclusiveness of His Service - Joshua said that he and his household would serve the Lord. I like that! His whole family was involved in serving the Lord. Joshua was such a strong and faithful believer that I do not believe that Mrs. Joshua and their children had any problem following his example.

Let me tell you about the Brink family in my church at Swift Creek Baptist. They have 8 children. Rick and Amy have led their children, not only to worship the Lord, but also to serve the Lord as a family. As the children got older, they would help out when Rick was serving the Lord by cutting the grass at the church! All of their children became teachers and/or worked in other capacities.

Is your whole household serving the Lord?

Conclusion: In closing, I must first of all appeal to individuals to leave the rocky, slippery slope of indecision, and take a stand for Jesus. Make your profession of faith. Do it today! Joshua said in v.15, “choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve.” Don’t spend another day in the middle road of indecision and delay. Do it today! Say, “I will take a stand for Jesus in the baptismal waters.”

I especially appeal to fathers here today. In Acts 16:31 the apostle Paul said to the Philippian jailor, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.” Take your place of spiritual leadership in your home, and it will make a big difference in the lives of your children, and in your own life. Let’s be more like Joshua, and let’s be stronger spiritual leaders. Let’s say with him, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

Sources: John R. Bisagno, *Life Without Compromise: Joshua Speaks Today* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1982); Matthew Henry (on *Online Bible*); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [Ver. 5:80] (Ontario: onlinebible.net, 2021); David M. Howard, Jr., *The New American Commentary: Joshua* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998); Francis A. Schaeffer, *Joshua and the Flow of Biblical History* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1975); “Selection and Service” from *The Expositor*, 2712 Trotter Road, Hopkins, SC 29061; Charles H. Spurgeon, *Spurgeon’s Expository Encyclopedia*, Vol. 9 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House), 481-492. Other sources listed in the footnotes. Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

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