

Forward: Claiming the Life God Gave You
Joshua 13:8-21:45 (Part 2)
How To Overcome Spiritual Complacency
Joshua 18:1-19:51

Introduction: We are not going to go verse by verse from Joshua 13:8 to 21:45 because it's predominantly a description of the geographical borders of the lands assigned to each tribe of Israel. There is nothing spiritual about the description of the land other than the fact God was fulfilling His covenant to give it to them. However, as you read through these chapters that are filled with the details of the borders of each tribe's inheritance, you will suddenly find yourself right in the middle of something deeply relevant to your relationship with God and life.

Last week I showed you four different examples of tribes who insubordinately refused to follow God's clear instructions to rid the land of the Canaanites and the terrible consequences that failure inflicted on future generations. From that, we had a conversation about the danger of justifying insubordination towards God in our own life and how to combat it. In similar fashion, today we are going to look at another story from this section of Joshua that will actually drive us deeper into the subject we talked about last week. What we are going to see today in our study of Joshua takes us to what I believe is the root cause for most, if not all, of our insubordination towards God—spiritual complacency.

Let me begin by showing you how the book of Joshua gets us into this subject. As I already stated, Joshua 13:8-21:45 is the description of the tribal inheritance of land. By the time you get to Joshua 18, only five tribes have been given their inheritance, meaning there were seven tribes still waiting to find out where they were supposed to set up shop!

Now, there is a little confusion about the twelve tribes of Israel that conspiracy theorist like to get people distracted with. They call it the lost tribe of Israel. Some say they migrated to the United States, and who knows, some may even say they got abducted by aliens! But what are the facts? Jacob, whose name was later changed to Israel, had twelve sons.

1. Reuben
2. Simeon
3. Levi
4. Judah
5. Dan
6. Naphtali
7. Gad
8. Asher
9. Issachar
10. Zebulun
11. Joseph
12. Benjamin

However, in Genesis 48, Jacob essentially acknowledged both sons of Joseph (Ephraim and Manasseh) as his own sons. I don't have time to tell you the story, but the super short version is that by time you get to chapter 48, Jacob and his other eleven sons had been reunited with Joseph, who had been sold into slavery by his brothers, but was now running Egypt for Pharaoh. For our purposes today, the part of that incredible story of reconciliation and God's providence that we need to recall, is that when Jacob was nearing his death, he gave his blessing to both sons of Joseph, and by doing so, officially established them as tribes of Israel. In this way Joseph actually became two tribes. There would be no singular tribe called "The Tribe of Joseph" that would inherit land, but instead there would be two separate tribes of Joseph; one in the name of his son Manasseh and the other in the name of his son Ephraim. This now takes us to thirteen tribes instead of twelve.

How then do we end up with a map with only twelve tribes? Did one of them get mad and leave? Were they kicked out? Did they build boats and move to North America? No!

God told Moses to set the tribe of Levi aside as a priestly tribe to serve God and Israel (Numbers 18:20). As such, they were not going to receive a tribal territory of their own to rule, but instead, lands within each tribe would be given to them so that they could live among all the people of Israel. Therefore, being Levi was not given a territory of their own, the inheritance was back down to being split twelve ways. There is no lost tribe! The tribal inheritance list then became the following:

1. Reuben
2. Simeon
3. Judah
4. Dan
5. Naphtali
6. Gad
7. Asher
8. Issachar
9. Zebulun
10. Joseph - Ephraim
11. Joseph - Manasseh
12. Benjamin

With that issue cleared up. Let's get back to who got what. After conquering the kings on the east side of the Jordan River, Moses gave lands to the tribes of Reuben, Gad and half of the tribe of Manasseh, but in doing so these tribes had to commit to send all their fighting men across the Jordan to help their brothers conquer the western part of the promised land (Numbers 32). After the death of Moses, Joshua and these two and a half tribes all affirmed this covenant (Joshua 1:12-18) and followed through with it. They went with Joshua and the other tribes across the Jordan to conquer the western lands, and in so doing left their families on the east side of the river to defend themselves. However, by the time we get to Joshua 18, the west has been won and the other half of the tribe of Manasseh has received their inheritance on the west side along with Ephraim. Judah has also received its

territory. Therefore, this leaves the following seven tribes waiting to find out which land they would receive as an inheritance to rule:

1. Simeon
2. Dan
3. Naphtali
4. Asher
5. Issachar
6. Zebulun
7. Benjamin

Now, you would think that there would be a lot of pressure building on Joshua from these seven tribes to hurry up and get their land. You would imagine there might even be some infighting and politicking going on over who would get what. I mean, after watching the other tribes get their inheritance you would think the leaders of these tribes would be sitting on the edge of their seat waiting to find out where God was going to plant them to prosper!

I mean, think about it. They've spent 40 years wondering in the wilderness and then fought tons of battles on both sides of the Jordan to conquer the land, and now it was time to get paid! Now was the time to inherit the lands they had conquered that were filled with cities they would not have to build and vineyards they would not have to plant! There were certainly parts that got destroyed in battle, but overall, it was move in ready land! After decades of homelessness, they now had a home they could not just survive on, but that they could thrive on! You would think they would be going nuts to get their families moved into the cities they conquered, to start planting crops and establishing trade relations, mining for minerals and precious metals, etc., etc., etc.; but nope, it seems they would just rather live in their tents and stay nomads with no home! After all, it's worked for them for over forty years ... why change? Who needs an opportunity to thrive when you can be lazy and survive? Why do the work that will bring the blessings of prosperity for generations to come, when complacency is keeping you alive? Why risk the unknown when the known seems to be working? What's the big deal? Isn't it admirable to settle for less when more is offered?

Now before we go further into this subject, let's quickly go through Joshua 18 and 19 and see how Joshua led these seven tribes.

(1) 1 Then the whole congregation of the people of Israel assembled at Shiloh and set up the tent of meeting there. The land lay subdued before them. 2 There remained among the people of Israel seven tribes whose inheritance had not yet been apportioned. 3 So Joshua said to the people of Israel, "How long will you put off going in to take possession of the land, which the LORD, the God of your fathers, has given you? (18:1-3)

- A. “The Hebrew word behind *wait* [or ‘put off’] means ‘to be slack’.¹
- B. “Once the “Tent of Meeting” (i.e., the Tabernacle) had been set up at Shiloh, we would have expected the other tribes to rush headlong into the vacant land and seize an inheritance for themselves. Instead we find that they were content to be squatters. Joshua had to indict them for being slackers (18:3). As a result of their lethargy they were impugning the character of the One who had promised to give them the land. This sorry state of affairs could not be allowed to continue. Joshua, therefore, summoned the whole congregation of the sons of Israel to assemble at Shiloh. There he challenged them with the fact that their dalliance was out of character with what the Lord required of them.”²
- C. “Apparently the tribes were to initiate matters relating to territorial allocations. Joshua probably viewed every passing day as a day lost in the program of completely occupying the land, a day in which the enemy could return or become more firmly entrenched.”³
- (2) 4 Provide three men from each tribe, and I will send them out that they may set out and go up and down the land. They shall write a description of it with a view to their inheritances, and then come to me. 5 They shall divide it into seven portions. Judah shall continue in his territory on the south, and the house of Joseph shall continue in their territory on the north. 6 And you shall describe the land in seven divisions and bring the description here to me. And I will cast lots for you here before the LORD our God. 7 The Levites have no portion among you, for the priesthood of the LORD is their heritage. And Gad and Reuben and half the tribe of Manasseh have received their inheritance beyond the Jordan eastward, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave them.” (18:4-7)**
- A. “The twenty-one men were surveyors, not spies.”⁴
- B. “Josephus wrote that these men were experts in geometry. Probably their parents had mastered the science of land surveying in Egypt. Who among them dreamed that their children would ever put that knowledge to use so strategically in their land of promise?”⁵

¹ Waltke, B. K. (1994). [Joshua](#). In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., pp. 254–255). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

² Barber, C. J. (2006). [Joshua: A Devotional Exposition](#) (pp. 155–158). Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers.

³ Campbell, D. K. (1985). [Joshua](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 360–361). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁴ Waltke, B. K. (1994). [Joshua](#). In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, . A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., pp. 254–255). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

⁵ Campbell, D. K. (1985). [Joshua](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 361). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

- (3) ... 9 So the men went and passed up and down in the land and wrote in a book a description of it by towns in seven divisions. Then they came to Joshua to the camp at Shiloh, 10 and Joshua cast lots for them in Shiloh before the LORD. And there Joshua apportioned the land to the people of Israel, to each his portion. (18:9-10)
- (4) The Book of Joshua then lays out how the land was divided up among the remaining seven tribes. I'm not going to read much of this at all to you but it's all in my notes I've included the entire text and some helpful comments from other authors to go deeper. Instead, let's take a quick look at the map and let me point out a couple things.



A. The Inheritance for Benjamin. (18:11-28)

⁶ Easley, K. H. (2002). *Holman QuickSource guide to understanding the Bible* (p. 46). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

1. **11 The lot of the tribe of the people of Benjamin according to its clans came up, and the territory allotted to it fell between the people of Judah and the people of Joseph. 12 On the north side their boundary began at the Jordan. Then the boundary goes up to the shoulder north of Jericho, then up through the hill country westward, and it ends at the wilderness of Beth-aven. 13 From there the boundary passes along southward in the direction of Luz, to the shoulder of Luz (that is, Bethel), then the boundary goes down to Ataroth-addar, on the mountain that lies south of Lower Beth-horon. 14 Then the boundary goes in another direction, turning on the western side southward from the mountain that lies to the south, opposite Beth-horon, and it ends at Kiriath-baal (that is, Kiriath-jearim), a city belonging to the people of Judah. This forms the western side. 15 And the southern side begins at the outskirts of Kiriath-jearim. And the boundary goes from there to Ephron, to the spring of the waters of Nephtoah. 16 Then the boundary goes down to the border of the mountain that overlooks the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, which is at the north end of the Valley of Rephaim. And it then goes down the Valley of Hinnom, south of the shoulder of the Jebusites, and downward to En-rogel. 17 Then it bends in a northerly direction going on to En-shemesh, and from there goes to Geliloth, which is opposite the ascent of Adummim. Then it goes down to the stone of Bohan the son of Reuben, 18 and passing on to the north of the shoulder of Beth-arabah it goes down to the Arabah. 19 Then the boundary passes on to the north of the shoulder of Beth-hoglah. And the boundary ends at the northern bay of the Salt Sea, at the south end of the Jordan: this is the southern border. 20 The Jordan forms its boundary on the eastern side. This is the inheritance of the people of Benjamin, according to their clans, boundary by boundary all around. 21 Now the cities of the tribe of the people of Benjamin according to their clans were Jericho, Beth-hoglah, Emek-keziz, 22 Beth-arabah, Zemaraim, Bethel, 23 Avvim, Parah, Ophrah, 24 Chephar-ammoni, Ophni, Geba--twelve cities with their villages: 25 Gibeon, Ramah, Beeroth, 26 Mizpeh, Chephirah, Mozah, 27 Rekem, Irpeel, Taralah, 28 Zela, Haeleph, Jebus (that is, Jerusalem), Gibeah and Kiriath-jearim--fourteen cities with their villages. This is the inheritance of the people of Benjamin according to its clans. (18:11-28)**
2. "Vs 11–20 list the boundaries of this area and vs 22–24 the towns included within those boundaries—twelve in the unattractive, dry eastern district (21–24) and fourteen crowded on the desirable watershed ridge north and west of Jerusalem (25–28)."⁷

⁷ Waltke, B. K. (1994). [Joshua](#). In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., p. 255). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

3. 18:11–28. Benjamin was assigned the land that lay between Judah and Joseph, a reference to Ephraim, thus minimizing the incipient rivalry between these leading tribes. Though their area was covered by mountains and ravines, extending only 25 miles from east to west and 15 miles at its widest point from north to south, it included many cities that were important in biblical history—Jericho ... Bethel ... Gibeon, Ramah ... Mizpah, and the Jebusite city ... Jerusalem (vv. 21–28). So the site of the future temple in Jerusalem was in the tribe of Benjamin, a fulfillment of Moses’ prophecy (Deut. 33:12).”⁸

B. The Inheritance for Simeon. (19:1-9)

1. **1 The second lot came out for Simeon, for the tribe of the people of Simeon, according to their clans, and their inheritance was in the midst of the inheritance of the people of Judah. 2 And they had for their inheritance Beersheba, Sheba, Moladah, 3 Hazar-shual, Balah, Ezem, 4 Eltolad, Bethul, Hormah, 5 Ziklag, Beth-marcaboth, Hazar-susah, 6Beth-lebaath, and Sharuhem--thirteen cities with their villages;7 Ain, Rimmon, Ether, and Ashan--four cities with their villages, 8 together with all the villages around these cities as far as Baalath-beer, Ramah of the Negeb. This was the inheritance of the tribe of the people of Simeon according to their clans. 9 The inheritance of the people of Simeon formed part of the territory of the people of Judah. Because the portion of the people of Judah was too large for them, the people of Simeon obtained an inheritance in the midst of their inheritance. (19:1-9)**
2. Now remember Judah has already received its allotment, but apparently after they surveyed the land they realized that Judah didn’t need, nor could likely manage, all the land they had been given. Therefore, part of it was set aside for another tribe. What a great example of being a team player. Judah didn’t get stingy and say you can’t give away land that you’ve already given to us, but instead they were flexible for the team and honest about their needs; after all, how can you be stingy with land that it took all of you to conquer!
3. “The second lot fell to Simeon, Jacob’s second son by Leah (Gn. 29:33). In mapping out the land, it was decided that Judah’s portion, though designated by lot, was larger than needed, and so Simeon was given land within Judah’s allocation (9). This fulfilled Jacob’s curse on Simeon that he should be dispersed in Israel (Gn. 49:7). In the taking of their lands, Judah and Simeon fought alongside each other (Jdg. 1:3). Simeon’s towns were concentrated in the vicinity of Beersheba and the north-eastern Negev fringe, where oases

⁸ Campbell, D. K. (1985). Joshua. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 361). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

are not numerous and where deep wells are essential for continuous settlement.”⁹

4. “Because **Judah** had **more** territory than it **needed** (v. 9), and in fulfillment of Jacob’s prophecy (cf. Gen. 49:5–7), **Simeon** was given land in the southern section of Judah’s **territory** with ... But it was not long before Simeon was to lose her individuality as a tribe, for her territory was incorporated eventually into that of Judah and many of her citizens migrated north to Ephraim and Manasseh (cf. 2 Chron. 15:9; 34:6). This explains why after the division of the kingdom following Solomon there were 10 tribes in the north and only 2 in the south (Judah and Benjamin).¹⁰

C. The Inheritance for Zebulun. (19:10-16)

1. **10 The third lot came up for the people of Zebulun, according to their clans. And the territory of their inheritance reached as far as Sarid. 11 Then their boundary goes up westward and on to Mareal and touches Dabbesheth, then the brook that is east of Jokneam. 12 From Sarid it goes in the other direction eastward toward the sunrise to the boundary of Chisloth-tabor. From there it goes to Daberath, then up to Japhia. 13 From there it passes along on the east toward the sunrise to Gath-hepher, to Eth-kazin, and going on to Rimmon it bends toward Neah, 14 then on the north the boundary turns about to Hannathon, and it ends at the Valley of Iphtahel; 15 and Kattath, Nahalal, Shimron, Idalah, and Bethlehem--twelve cities with their villages. 16 This is the inheritance of the people of Zebulun, according to their clans--these cities with their villages. (19:10-16)**
2. “Zebulun is the first of the remaining small tribes to receive its inheritance. This section is essentially a standard boundary and city list. However, the information given is inconsistent. Verse 15 specifies that Zebulun received 12 cities. However, only five cities are named in v. 15. Some of the names may have been omitted by scribal error in the process of copying the biblical text.”¹¹
3. “According to Jacob’s prophecy **Zebulun** would “live by the seashore and become a haven for ships” (Gen. 49:13). She was assigned a portion in lower Galilee which many consider to have been landlocked. However, it is possible to understand that a strip of land extended to the Mediterranean Sea forming an enclave in Issachar’s territory. Strangely omitted is the city of

⁹ Waltke, B. K. (1994). [Joshua](#). In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., p. 255). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

¹⁰ Campbell, D. K. (1985). [Joshua](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 361). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

¹¹ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (Jos 19:10–16). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

Nazareth which was within the borders of Zebulun's allotment. (The **Bethlehem** mentioned in Josh. 19:15 is not the Bethlehem village in Judah [Micah 5:2] where Jesus was born.)¹²

D. The Inheritance for Issachar. (19:17-23)

- 1. 17 The fourth lot came out for Issachar, for the people of Issachar, according to their clans. 18 Their territory included Jezreel, Chesulloth, Shunem, 19 Hapharaim, Shion, Anaharath, 20 Rabbith, Kishion, Ebez, 21 Remeth, En-gannim, En-haddah, Beth-pazzez. 22 The boundary also touches Tabor, Shahazumah, and Beth-shemesh, and its boundary ends at the Jordan--sixteen cities with their villages. 23 This is the inheritance of the tribe of the people of Issachar, according to their clans--the cities with their villages. (19:17-23)**
2. "Issachar was a small tribe whose inheritance was in the region later known as Galilee. Verse 22 states that Issachar had 16 cities; however, Tabor generally refers to a mountain, not a town, leaving the list at 15 cities. Arriving at 16 cities for this list then requires either dividing Shahazumah into two place names or adding Beeroth (included in the Greek Septuagint version of this list). The existence of a village named Tabor is still possible, especially since Tabor is listed as a Levitical city in 1 Chr 6:77 (though taken from the territory of Zebulun, not Issachar).¹³

E. The Inheritance for Asher. (19:24-31)

- 1. 24 The fifth lot came out for the tribe of the people of Asher according to their clans. 25 Their territory included Helkath, Hali, Beten, Achshaph, 26 Allammelech, Amad, and Mishal. On the west it touches Carmel and Shihor-libnath, 27 then it turns eastward, it goes to Beth-dagon, and touches Zebulun and the Valley of Iphtahel northward to Beth-emek and Neiel. Then it continues in the north to Cabul, 28 Ebron, Rehob, Hammon, Kanah, as far as Sidon the Great. 29 Then the boundary turns to Ramah, reaching to the fortified city of Tyre. Then the boundary turns to Hosah, and it ends at the sea; Mahalab, Achzib, 30 Ummah, Aphek and Rehob--twenty-two cities with their villages. 31 This is the inheritance of the tribe of the people of Asher according to their clans--these cities with their villages. (19:24-31)**

¹² Campbell, D. K. (1985). [Joshua](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 361). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

¹³ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (Jos 19:17-23). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

2. “Unlike the preceding descriptions, Asher’s inheritance is not given as a city list. Instead, small clusters of cities appear. Counting the city names gives a total of 23; however, v. 30 indicates that Asher received 22.”¹⁴
3. “**Asher** was assigned the Mediterranean coastal lands from Mount **Carmel** north to **Sidon** and **Tyre**. By virtue of her vital position she was to protect Israel from northern coastal enemies such as the Phoenicians. By David’s time Asher had faded into insignificance though her tribal identity was not lost. Anna the prophetess, who along with Simeon gave thanks for the birth of Jesus, was from the tribe of Asher (cf. Luke 2:36–38).”¹⁵

F. The Inheritance for Naphtali. (19:32-39)

1. **32 The sixth lot came out for the people of Naphtali, for the people of Naphtali, according to their clans. 33 And their boundary ran from Heleph, from the oak in Zaananim, and Adami-nekeb, and Jabneel, as far as Lakkum, and it ended at the Jordan. 34 Then the boundary turns westward to Aznoth-tabor and goes from there to Hukkok, touching Zebulun at the south and Asher on the west and Judah on the east at the Jordan. 35 The fortified cities are Ziddim, Zer, Hammath, Rakkath, Chinnereth, 36 Adamah, Ramah, Hazor, 37Kedesh, Edrei, Enhazor, 38 Yiron, Migdal-el, Horem, Beth-anath, and Beth-shemesh--nineteen cities with their villages. 39 This is the inheritance of the tribe of the people of Naphtali according to their clans--the cities with their villages. (19:32-39)**
2. “The sixth lot fell to Naphtali, Jacob’s youngest son by Rachel’s servant, Bilhah (Gn. 30:7; 49:21). His land included attractive, densely forested mountains and fairly fertile lower areas. Through this heartland of Galilee ran the major trade route between Jezreel and points north.”¹⁶
3. “Adjacent to Asher on the east, **Naphtali** had **the Jordan** River and the Sea of Galilee as its eastern boundary. While not highly significant as a region in the Old Testament period, Naphtali occupied lands that were important in New Testament history because the Galilean ministry of Jesus Christ was centered there. Isaiah the prophet contrasted Naphtali’s early gloom (due to Assyrian invasion) with its glory when Christ would be there (cf. Isa. 9:1–2; Matt. 4:13–17).”¹⁷

¹⁴ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). *Faithlife Study Bible* (Jos 19:24–31). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

¹⁵ Campbell, D. K. (1985). *Joshua*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 362). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

¹⁶ Waltke, B. K. (1994). *Joshua*. In D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, & G. J. Wenham (Eds.), *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., p. 255). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

¹⁷ Campbell, D. K. (1985). *Joshua*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 362). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

G. **The Inheritance for Dan.** (19:40-48)

1. **40** The seventh lot came out for the tribe of the people of Dan, according to their clans. **41** And the territory of its inheritance included Zorah, Eshtaol, Ir-shemesh, **42** Shaalabbin, Aijalon, Ithlah, **43** Elon, Timnah, Ekron, **44** Eltekeh, Gibbethon, Baalath, **45** Jehud, Bene-berak, Gath-rimmon, **46** and Me-jarkon and Rakkon with the territory over against Joppa. **47** When the territory of the people of Dan was lost to them, the people of Dan went up and fought against Leshem, and after capturing it and striking it with the sword they took possession of it and settled in it, calling Leshem, Dan, after the name of Dan their ancestor. **48** This is the inheritance of the tribe of the people of Dan, according to their clans--these cities with their villages. (19:40-48)
2. "The least desirable portion fell to Dan. Surrounded by Ephraim and Benjamin on the north and east and by Judah on the south, her boundaries coincided with theirs so Dan's borders are not described. Only towns are included, which numbered 17. Not only was their original location too small but after part of the territory of Dan was lost to the Amorites (Jud. 1:34) most of the tribe migrated to the far north, and attacked and settled in the city of Leshem (Laish) opposite the northern sector of Naphtali and named it Dan (cf. Jud. 18; Gen. 49:17)."¹⁸
3. **19:40–48** Dan is the last tribe to receive its inheritance. Dan was unable to conquer its allotted territory described here and eventually migrated north to an entirely different region (Judg 1:34; 18:1). The description includes note of this migration (Josh 19:47), indicating either that the verse is a later editorial note or that the book was written after this occurred. Dan was unique among the tribes of Israel in that it forsook the inheritance Yahweh gave them."¹⁹

H. **The Inheritance of Joshua and the Conclusion.** (19:49-51)

1. **49** When they had finished distributing the several territories of the land as inheritances, the people of Israel gave an inheritance among them to Joshua the son of Nun. **50** By command of the LORD they gave him the city that he asked, Timnath-serah in the hill country of Ephraim. And he rebuilt the city and settled in it. **51** These are the inheritances that Eleazar the priest and Joshua the son of Nun and the

¹⁸ Campbell, D. K. (1985). [Joshua](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 362). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

¹⁹ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (Jos 19:40–48). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

heads of the fathers' houses of the tribes of the people of Israel distributed by lot at Shiloh before the LORD, at the entrance of the tent of meeting. So they finished dividing the land. (19:49-51)

2. Joshua had no plans of sticking around Shiloh. God did not lead them out of Egypt for him to leave his family in a tent in Shiloh, but he also didn't want to take advantage of his position and grant himself land. As the leader of God's people, he wanted to make sure everybody else had a place before he took his, and he wasn't going to demand a section of land be carved off for him to essentially become an independent tribe. Rather, as a servant to God and the people, Joshua waited for the people to reward his leadership with the offer to choose land within the allotment given to the tribe Joshua was a part of—Ephraim.
3. In addition, instead of asserting his authority and claiming the best possible lands, he actually asked for what some scholars believe to be the most difficult land within his tribe's allotment. He and his people would have to work harder than anybody else in his tribe to develop their land and prosper. You could almost see that entrepreneurial passion in his request. He would rather go to a place with nothing and build something that was truly belonging to his family and their faith and faithful labor with God, than to move into a former Canaanite city and remodel it. Joshua showed no signs of complacency, despite the fact he was old and in the final decade of his life.
4. "Joshua's choice of land further reveals his humility. He asked for **Timnath Serah**, a city in the rugged, infertile, mountainous district of his own tribe (**Ephraim**), when he could have appropriated land in the fairest and most productive area of Canaan. With deep appreciation for his godly leadership the sons of Israel granted Joshua his modest request, **and he built up the town and settled there**. In one of the final pictures of this stalwart leader, Joshua is seen as a builder (in addition to his being a general and an administrator). The combination is rare among God's servants. All the tribes received their **territories ... by lot** (see comments on 14:1-5)."²⁰
5. "**Timnath Serah** Joshua was eventually buried in this city (see 24:30)."²¹
6. "The city he asks to be given to himself and his family was a mere heap of stones, either because it had been demolished and converted into a heap of ruins, or because no city had yet been built upon it. It is conjectured with probability, that with the view of making the grant as little invidious as

²⁰ Campbell, D. K. (1985). [Joshua](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 362). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

²¹ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (Jos 19:50). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

possible, the city he requested was of no great value. ... Truly no ambition can be detected here, inasmuch as he desires nothing for himself, and does not rashly act from a feeling of covetousness, but seeks in the popular consent a confirmation of the honour which God had already bestowed upon him. To have been silent in such a case, would have been more indicative of heartlessness than of modesty.”²²

So, the point is, Joshua refused to let the people of Israel live in complacency, nor did he let himself live that way! Joshua forced the people to leave the comfort of what they knew so that they would follow God into the prosperity He was giving them. You can see his heart for the people to thrive in the gift of God, as well as his absolute refusal to let complacency lead them into insubordination towards God. Joshua was anything but a complacent leader!

It was God’s will for them to claim the land and thrive on the land, and as such display God’s glory to the nations. But, as long as they were content with living in their tents as nomads, that was never going to happen. Worse, the longer they sat in their tents in Shiloh, the more likely the Canaanites were reoccupying the cities they had already conquered and preparing to fight Israel again! They could not afford to sit around procrastinating. They could not be complacent with the victories of the past. They needed to move into their lands and start growing and thriving as individual tribes or they would inevitably have to at best start all over again and reconquer the land; or at worse be conquered themselves!

Interestingly, there is no such thing as a successful plan to stay the same. The universe is simply not designed that way. Nothing stays the same and without intentional effort the nature of the universe is to decay, not grow. The second law of thermodynamics is called entropy. Entropy is the measure of unavailable energy in a system, something that is always increasing unless energy is added to it. James R. Newman put it this way, **“Entropy is the general trend of the universe toward death and disorder.”**²³

However, entropy is not just a principle of physics, it’s a principle of leadership as well. It’s why a business, organization, team or even an individual that has a plan to keep everything as it is, will almost certainly soon find themselves failing at their plan. Any plan to stay the same, that is to be complacent with where you are, is a plan that is almost guaranteed to fail; and that absolutely includes your relationship with God as well. If your approach to your relationship with Christ is to maintain your faith, then believe it or not your plan is actually to decline.

Spiritual complacency is spiritual death. The very nature of God is life, and His life by nature grows and multiples; it’s what His life is and does, and thus, to not grow and multiply is a sign of the absence of His life; it is a sign of the presence of death and decay, it is a sign of the curse, it is a sign that what is defining you is not GOD and His LIFE!

²² Calvin, J., & Beveridge, H. (2010). *Commentary on the Book of Joshua* (pp. 237–238). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

²³ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/entropy>

Let me be more specific. The Bible actually doesn't leave us wondering over what will happen if we accept spiritual complacency as our reality. Let me share five dangerous realities of spiritual complacency in the Bible, then I want to close out our time by giving you a pastoral plan to break the pattern of complacency in your life. There's nothing harder than breaking complacency. You would think complacency has no power, that it would somehow be the absence of power, but it's actually the opposite. Complacency is an incredibly powerful force. It is the direction of the entire fallen universe! Complacency can absolutely imprison you. But, before I give you a plan to break it, let me first show you why the Bible tells us it needs to be broke!

Five Examples of the Danger of Spiritual Complacency in the book of Revelation.

Proposition: The following are five Biblical examples of the dangers of justifying spiritual complacency in your life.

I could have gone all kinds of places in the Bible, but the book of Revelation has some that are just too hard to not talk about.

The first Biblical example of the danger of justifying spiritual complacency in your life is that it ...

(1) Opens the door to end up loving what you do for God more than you love God. (Revelation 2:1-5)

A. 1 "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: 'The words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands. 2 "I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. 3 I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. 4 But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. 5 Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. (Revelation 2:1-5)

B. The church in Ephesus is literally doing everything they are supposed to be doing and doing it extremely well! But something horrible has happened in the process of doing all the things they should be doing. They are no longer being driven by God's love for them; it's no longer about knowing Him, but rather it's about the things they are doing that they believe are for Him. Jesus says if you don't repent, I'm going to remove your lampstand! That doesn't mean they will no longer be saved but rather the spiritual blessings and life that they had experienced up to this point will be gone.

- C. Spiritual complacency is what opened the door to this reality. Spiritual complacency can allow us to start valuing what we are doing more than we value who we are doing it with—Jesus!
- D. It's kind of scary how easy it is to confuse doing things for God as doing things with God; that is, it is so easy to tell yourself that the passion you have in doing things for God is actually a passion for God, when it's really just a passion for the things you are doing. Its really not about any love of God at all! You might even love God for letting you do what you love to do; but that's entirely different than loving God because of what He has done for you in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, and as such, loving God for what He has given you in a relationship with Him!
- E. The irony is that this kind of spiritual complacency leads to idolatry. As we make less room for God, the void is filled by the very things we say are for God. Instead of loving God with all our heart, the idol of our heart becomes the thing we claim is for Him. Idolatry is never for God, even if we put His name on it!

The second Biblical example of the danger of justifying spiritual complacency in your life is that it ...

- (2) **Opens the door to make room for false doctrine that leads you further away from God. (Revelation 2:12-16)**
 - A. **12 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: 'The words of him who has the sharp two-edged sword. 13 "I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. Yet you hold fast my name, and you did not deny my faith even in the days of Antipas my faithful witness, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. 14 But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, so that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice sexual immorality. 15 So also you have some who hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. 16 Therefore repent. If not, I will come to you soon and war against them with the sword of my mouth. (Revelation 2:12-16)**
 - B. In Numbers 22, Balak was the King of Moab on the eastside of the Jordan. He saw how the Israelites had defeated the Amorites, so he decided to try and get the prophet Balaam to pronounce a curse on Israel. Balaam wouldn't do it, but he did tell Balak how to undermine the blessings of God on Israel. He told Balak to get the Moabite women to seduce the Israelite men, and in so doing, get them to also worship their gods. God told Moses what was going on and he executed all the men who participated in it, including the leaders of Israel who found themselves either participating in it or allowing it.

- C. Now, we don't know exactly who the Nicolaitans were, but given the illustration of Balak, the best guess is that they were teaching some concept of grace being a license to sin without guilt, as opposed to the power to overcome sin! What a relevant problem! Churches throughout western civilization are changing the doctrine of Grace from the bloody substitutionary death of Christ that frees us from sin and its consequences, to a doctrine that redefines sin as something other than what cost Jesus His life!
- 1) "They were seemingly a class of professing Christians, who sought to introduce into the church a false freedom or licentiousness, thus abusing Paul's doctrine of grace (comp. 2 Pet. 2:15, 16, 19), and were probably identical with those who held the doctrine of Baalam (q.v.), Rev. 2:14"²⁴
 - 2) "A Gnostic sect of this name, however, is alluded to by *Irenaeus, *Clement of Alexandria, and Pseudo-*Tertullian; and Irenaeus affirms that they were founded by the Nicolas of Antioch mentioned in Acts 6:5, though this is perhaps no more than a conjecture."²⁵
 - 3) "Little is known about this group aside from the biblical references. Some scholars suggest that the Nicolaitans and the followers of Balaam (v. 14) were one and the same, a theory based largely on the similar etymology "to conquer the people" ascribed to both names (Gk. *niká laón*, Heb. *bāla' ām*); the LXX, however, never uses Gk. *nikáō* to translate Heb. *bāla'* Others speculate that the Nicolaitans were followers of Nicolaus (*Nikolaos*) of Antioch, one of the seven original elders (Acts 6:5), but again there is no evidence other than a similarity of names (cf. Irenaeus *Adv. haer.* i.26.3; iii:11.1), 1). The Nicolaitans may have practiced idolatry (especially eating meat offered to idols) and immorality (Tertullian *Adv. Marc.* i.29; *De praesc. her.* 33; *De pudic.* 19; Clement of Alexandria *Strom.* ii:20; iii:24), like other sects mentioned by name such as the followers of Balaam (Rev. 2:14) and Jezebel (vv. 20–24). Accordingly, some scholars have sought to establish a connection between this sect and the later Gnostics (cf. Hippolytus *Ref.* vii:36; Eusebius (*HE* iii:29))."²⁶
- D. When we get to a place that we are willing to believe doctrines that are clearly not in synch with the Gospel, then it's because we no longer value our relationship with God enough to trust what He has revealed through His Son. When we are willing to adopt teachings that are clearly unbiblical, we are saying we don't really value The Truth and consequently, we don't value a relationship with Jesus who is The Truth!

²⁴ Easton, M. G. (1893). In [*Illustrated Bible Dictionary and Treasury of Biblical History, Biography, Geography, Doctrine, and Literature*](#) (p. 501). New York: Harper & Brothers.

²⁵ Cross, F. L., & Livingstone, E. A. (Eds.). (2005). In [*The Oxford dictionary of the Christian Church*](#) (3rd ed. rev., p. 1159). Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.

²⁶ Myers, A. C. (1987). In [*The Erdmans Bible dictionary*](#) (pp. 762–763). Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

- E. You would think replacing the doctrines of the Bible with the opinions of man would lead people to not go to church, but it doesn't for everybody. People who value the relationships, sense of community and religious practices of their church more than they value the life they can have with God through His truth have no problem with false doctrine, so long as it doesn't affect what they care about. As long as people who claim to be Christians approve of what they believe, it doesn't matter to them that God clearly doesn't. They are complacent without God and just like those who love what they do more than the one they claim to do it for, their idol becomes the affirmation of the church and their own beliefs, rather than the affirmation of God and His Truth!
- F. But how could an elder of a church stand by and allow somebody to teach doctrine that is opposed to the Gospel? How could a pastor sit still and watch while the sheep are devoured? There's only one way this happens, spiritual complacency. When an elder is either too lazy to confront a wolf trying to lead the sheep away, or no longer believes leading the sheep from following a wolf is that important because he doesn't believe wolves are dangerous to sheep; then that elder is doing so because that elder has himself arrived at a place of spiritual complacency where God's life is really not that important to him. Any pastor who stands idly by while the sheep follow a false gospel is a pastor who at minimum no longer values a relationship with Jesus, or at most is himself a wolf!

The third Biblical example of the danger of justifying spiritual complacency in your life is that it ...

- (3) **Opens the door to justify sin in your life that will end up destroying you and others. (Revelation 2:18-23)**
 - A. **18 "And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: 'The words of the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and whose feet are like burnished bronze. 19 "I know your works, your love and faith and service and patient endurance, and that your latter works exceed the first. 20 But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols. 21 I gave her time to repent, but she refuses to repent of her sexual immorality. 22 Behold, I will throw her onto a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent of her works, 23 and I will strike her children dead. And all the churches will know that I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you according to your works. (Revelation 2:18-23)**
 - B. Now once again, the one leading people to sin, those living in it and the elders of the church who are allowing it to exist without rebuke are confronted. The complacency of the elders of the church in Thyatira have created the opportunity

for the woman Jezebel to freely work! Likewise, the spiritual complacency of the people within the church is what's making them vulnerable to follow her. Some scholars believe this was likely pagan festival practices that involved eating food that they offered to gods at the festival and then participated in the orgies that accompanied these festivals as acts of worship to the gods. If you are truly being driven by your love of Jesus, you are not going to find yourself approving of sexual immorality and idolatry.

- C. Believing false doctrine is sin, no doubt, but I know all kinds of very moral and ethical people who believe complete and total heresy. So, it's important to note the opposite as well. I've experienced this one myself. I've never found myself believing or teaching a false gospel, but I have certainly seen spiritual complacency open the door for me to justify sin in my life.
- D. I've heard it said nobody falls into sin, they walk into it intentionally. Although I know what they are getting at when they say it, I do think its misleading. When we become complacent with a lackluster or dead relationship with Jesus its incredible how we can find ourselves justifying sin in our life, even if for a moment, and have no idea how we ended up there. Spiritual entropy takes over when we are no longer walking in step with the Spirit. Spiritual entropy takes over when God's fire is no longer hot in our hearts! I would imagine King David, would absolutely agree that you can have all your beliefs right, but end up justifying sin you would never imagine justifying when you allow your relationship with God to no longer be the driving force of your life.

The fourth Biblical example of the danger of justifying spiritual complacency in your life is that it ...

- (4) **Opens the door for you to give more credibility to the affirmation others give you about your spiritual health than you do the fruitless vine you see in the mirror. (Revelation 3:1-3)**
 - A. **1 "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write: 'The words of him who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars. "'I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead. 2 Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is about to die, for I have not found your works complete in the sight of my God. 3 Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you. (Revelation 3:1-3)**
 - B. The church at Sardis had everybody fooled, and apparently, they also let everybody fool them as well! When he says, "wake up," he's saying stop being complacent. You are NOT ok! You are spiritually dead. There is not fruit on the vine and the vine is about to die!

- C. In John 15 we see that Jesus made it clear that if we are abiding in Him (the opposite of being complacent) we will bear much fruit. But if we are not bearing fruit, it's because we are not abiding in Him!
- D. A vine can be huge and have all kinds of leaves on it and never produce fruit. People who don't know better will think a big, huge vine with lots of leaves is a healthy vine, but that's not the case at all! Healthy vines produce fruit! Spiritual complacency therefore finds all the affirmation it needs from those who applaud the leaves they see in our lives, and as such, we end up filling our hearts with the affirmation we receive from others, instead of the joy and fulfillment of an actual abiding relationship with Him. In the end, a fruitless vine will be a dead vine, or in the case of the illustration of Jesus in John 15, a fruitless branch is one that gets tossed into the fire and consumed!

The fifth Biblical example of the danger of justifying spiritual complacency in your life is that it ...

(5) Results in your life being of no eternal use. (Revelation 3:14-22)

- A. **14 "And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation. 15 "I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! 16 So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. 17 For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. 18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. (Revelation 3:14-22)**
- B. I'm one who sides with the exegesis of this passage that doesn't somehow see cold as being really bad, and hot as being really good. God would never applaud a person whose knowingly and proudly totally insubordinate towards Him. There is no honor with God in that, only wrath. Therefore, I believe the proper interpretation of the passage sees the context of the cold water as serving the purpose of a refreshing cold-water spring to a person who's thirsty, and the hot water serving the purpose of a soothing hot drink like tea or coffee. Lukewarm however is good for nothing, it neither refreshes nor soothes!
- C. A complacent life is a worthless life, to God, others and even to themselves. I'm not saying that in an ugly way, just an honest way. Complacent people not only do nothing to help others, but they also do nothing to help themselves either!
- D. So, Jesus says to the church in Laodicea who has allowed their financial prosperity and ease of life to satisfy their lives, to realize they are complacent with the riches of this world that are in the end not rich at all! Their spiritual

complacency has lowered their expectations of life from abounding in the One who is life, to abounding in that which has no life!

Challenge: No one overcomes complacency by simply thinking about it. You overcome complacency with action. The following is a sample plan for you to attack your spiritual complacency.

Note: As you saw with the church in Ephesus, doing things doesn't mean you're not living in spiritual complacency, but doing nothing also never breaks the habit of doing nothing! Jesus didn't approach people and say think about following me, He said follow ME! However, most of the time I hear pastors give a plan to break spiritual complacency and turn our heads and hearts towards Jesus that only a deeply disciplined person can succeed at doing. Larry Osborne called it Navy Seal Christianity. It's awesome, but there is a reason only a few elite people ever make it to a Seal Team. So, I'm not giving you an excuse to not increase or go beyond this, but I also want you to know you can break the cycle of spiritual complacency in your life without signing up for the spiritual version of BUD/S training!

Here's a sample weekly plan to break the cycle of spiritual complacency and help you start growing in the life of Christ. Move things around to whichever day that works best for you but take at least one day for each.

- (1) Sunday - Commit to regularly attend a worship gathering in a local church that inspires you with Gospel centered music and preaching.**
- (2) Monday - Spend time reading God's Word. Write down what the passage taught you about God, the Gospel, yourself, life, faith, etc.**

Note: There are a million reading plans for the Bible, however, reading the Bible is not a race to see if you can read it all in a year. If you can that's great, but it's always better that you read and reflect (meditate) than it is to read and roll on!

- (3) Tuesday - Worship Jesus by yourself (the Worship 24/7 App is awesome!).**
- (4) Wednesday - Listen to a podcast of a trusted Bible preacher or teacher.**

Note: Take a walk and listen to it or listen to it on the way back and forth to work, or while you wash dishes; doesn't matter when you do it, just do it!

- (5) Thursday - Commit to a small group Bible study/Life Group where you can build relationships with other people who are trying to grow in their love of Jesus.**
- (6) Friday - Live missionally! Pray for those in your life that are far from God, try to do something with them and look for opportunities to expose them to the Gospel (invite them to church with you!).**

- (7) Saturday – Take time with your family to talk about what God is doing in your life, the Gospel, prayer needs, missional efforts, etc.**

Note: I've loved watching episodes of The Chosen with my family and talking about what we saw that was from the Bible and what we saw that was creatively assumed. More importantly I love talking about the Gospel context, significance and personal challenge in each episode.