

Questions

1. How do you see the connection between “guarding the word” and guarding your own spiritual flourishing?
2. Where do you personally recognize subtle drift from God’s Word? Those places where you tend to soften Scripture, excuse yourself, or let the world disciple you more than the Word.
3. Where have you tended to separate “relationship with God” from “obedience to God’s Word,” and what does that reveal about what you actually believe will deepen intimacy with Him?
4. What would dependence on the Spirit look like practically in one specific area of obedience that feels “impossible” right now?
5. Which rival loves function as God-counterfeits for you (promising what only God can give)?
6. What practice, habit, or rhythm could you adopt (or return to) that would help you guard your heart to loyally love to God?

*Need prayer?
Someone will be up front by the piano
to pray with you after the 1st & 2nd services.*

gbclorton.com/sermons

Joshua

The Story of
The Promise-Keeping God

A Call to Covenant Loyalty

Joshua 23:1-16

Stuart McCray, Associate Pastor
November 2, 2025

In Joshua 23, God calls His people to two expressions of covenant loyalty, so we would remain loyal to God and not turn to idols—a loyalty ultimately fulfilled in Christ and now empowered in us to fulfill through the Holy Spirit.

THEM THEN OF THE TEXT

SUZERAIN-VASSAL TREATY

Joshua 23 is shaped like an Ancient Near Eastern treaty—a Suzerain-Vassal Treaty.

Basic Parts

- The Introduction & Historical Prologue: Who the king is and what he’s done for the people.
- The Stipulations: The terms for how the vassals are to live in response.
- The Blessings & Curses: What happens if they obey or disobey the terms.

The Introduction & Historical Prologue | Verses 2-5, 9-10, 14

Everything else in this treaty rests on the foundation of who their King is and what He’s done for them. The loyalty they are to show is a response to the LORD’s loyalty first given.

The Stipulations | Verses: 6-8, 11

It is covenant loyalty, seen in two expressions:

- Obeying the King's word. And,
- Love for the King Himself.

"Continue obeying" literally means "to keep", "guard", or "watch over." It's the same word in Genesis 2:15 for Adam's task in the garden "to work it and *watch over* it."

"Be loyal" literally means "cling to." It can also be translated as "bonds with" or "hold fast to" or "cleave to." It's the same verb used in Genesis 2:24, "This is why a man leaves his father and mother and *bonds with* his wife, and they become one flesh."

"Loyalty" in verse 12 is the same as back in verse 8 ("be loyal"), which literally means "cling to."

"Diligently watch" (v.11) is the same word back in verse 6 ("continue obeying"), which literally means "watch over."

The Blessings & Curses | Verses: 12-13, 15-16

Just as not one word of God's promise failed, so also not one word of God's warning will fail. God's justice is as certain as His mercy.

BRIDGE TO CHRIST

Ezekiel 36:6-27

Jesus is the true and better Israelite. He is the faithful covenant-keeper, because he perfectly obeyed and loved God with an undivided heart. What's more: on the cross, He bore the covenant curse for his people's disloyalty. Meaning: Jesus became exiled, so that in Him, we could be brought back in. The loyalty God required was ultimately fulfilled in Jesus. And now, we who belong to him, through the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit, can live in covenant loyalty to God—not by our strength, but by His.

1. SPIRIT-EMPOWERED LOYALTY OBEYS GOD'S WORD (vv.6-8)

John 14:15; Romans 8:4

How to Pursue Spirit-empowered obedience to God's Word:

- Anchor yourself in Scripture.

- Resist cultural drift

- Depend on the Spirit

2. SPIRIT-EMPOWERED LOYALTY LOVES GOD HIMSELF (vv.11-12)

Mark 12:30; 1 John 4:10, 19

Augustine describes our love drifting as, "disordered loves."

"Diligently watch yourselves":

- Marvel at God's love for you

- Identify and reorder disordered loves