



International Bible Study Commentary

Verse-by-Verse Bible Lessons Thru the Bible

L.G. Parkhurst, Jr.

International Bible Lessons Teaching English as a Foreign Language

Teacher Page: Why and When You Cannot Joshua 24:18-27 (English Standard Version)

October 4, 2026

Before You Teach

A Note to the Teacher: This lesson is a flexible resource bank and contains more material than you will need for one class. Before teaching, choose and mark the activities and questions that best fit your students' English level, interests, and available time. You are not expected to use everything.

Suggested 60-Minute Selection: Choose 2 warm-up questions, 4-6 vocabulary words, 4 comprehension questions, 2 discussion or speaking questions, and 1 writing activity. The writing activity may also be assigned as homework.

Purpose and Scripture Materials

Purpose: Teach English as a Foreign Language using Joshua 24:18-27 in the English Standard Version as the reading text. New to TEFL? We recommend certification training through The TEFL Academy, which will teach you how to use and write TEFL lessons such as this Teacher-Led English Lesson.

Recommended Level: A2-B1 | Lesson Length: 30-45 minutes

Pronunciation Practice: The student can read along with the Scripture audio to practice English pronunciation with the teacher's help. The teacher may pause the audio after each verse or sentence so the student can repeat difficult words and phrases.

Lesson Resources

Scripture Text: Joshua 24:18-27 ESV - Scripture Audio: Joshua 24:18-27 ESV

The student may read along with the audio while the teacher pauses for pronunciation practice.

1) Lesson Overview

Theme: God's holiness, the danger of divided loyalty, choosing to serve the LORD, putting away every rival, inclining the heart toward God, obeying His voice, and keeping covenant.

English Skills: Reading, listening, vocabulary building, pronunciation, discussion, speaking practice, examining cause and effect, and writing.

Outcome: The student can explain Joshua's warning, describe the people's commitment, and identify the actions that showed whether their promise to serve the LORD was sincere.

Teacher Tip

Help students read, write, listen to, and speak English while they study the ESV Scripture text. Encourage complete sentences, ask gentle follow-up questions, and give students time to think. Adjust the activities to fit the students' ages, number, English proficiency, and available class time.

Understanding Joshua's Warning

When Joshua said, 'You are not able to serve the LORD,' he challenged easy promises and divided hearts. The LORD is holy, rival gods must be put away, and the whole heart must be inclined toward Him. Faithful service requires sincere faith, repentance, obedience, and dependence upon God.

2) Suggested Lesson Flow

1. Begin with two warm-up questions.
2. Assign each student one or more verses to study and read aloud.
3. Ask what the assigned verses say and mean.
4. Summarize the conversation between Joshua and the people.
5. Play the Scripture audio while students read along.
6. Review vocabulary and practice difficult pronunciation.
7. Use selected comprehension, discussion, and speaking questions.
8. Finish with one writing activity and the final question.

3) Warm-Up Questions

Choose 2. Mark the questions you plan to use.

- ☐ Why is it sometimes easier to make a promise than to keep it?
- ☐ What actions can show that a person's words are sincere?
- ☐ What can divide a person's loyalty?
- ☐ How can a witness or written record help people remember a commitment?

4) Vocabulary

Choose 4-6. Mark the words and prompts you plan to use.

Word/Phrase	Meaning	Teacher Prompt
holy	Perfectly pure and set apart from all sin and evil.	Why did Joshua remind the people that the LORD is holy?
jealous	Requiring the exclusive love and loyalty that rightly belong to God.	What did God's jealousy require of Israel?
forsake	To abandon, reject, or turn away from someone.	What if Israel forsook the LORD?
witnesses	People or things that confirm what was said or promised.	Who were witnesses to the people's choice?
incline your heart	Turn your desires, loyalty, and attention toward someone.	Toward whom were they to incline their hearts?
covenant	A solemn and binding agreement or relationship.	What did Joshua make at Shechem?
statutes and rules	Established laws and instructions that govern conduct.	What did Joshua put in place for the people?
deal falsely	Act dishonestly or faithlessly toward someone.	What did the stone warn them not to do?

5) Bible Text Comprehension

Choose 4. Mark the questions you plan to use.

- ☐ Why did the people say they would serve the LORD?
- ☐ What two descriptions of God did Joshua give in verse 19?
- ☐ What did Joshua warn would happen if they served foreign gods?
- ☐ How did the people answer Joshua's warning?
- ☐ What had the people chosen to do?
- ☐ What did Joshua tell them to put away?
- ☐ Toward whom were they to incline their hearts?
- ☐ Whose voice did the people promise to obey?
- ☐ Where did Joshua make a covenant with the people?
- ☐ What two records or witnesses did Joshua establish?

6) Scripture Discussion

Choose a total of 2 from Scripture Discussion and/or Speaking Practice.
Mark the questions you plan to use.

- ☐ Why did Joshua challenge the people's quick promise?
- ☐ How does God's holiness make serving Him a serious commitment?
- ☐ What is the difference between godly and sinful jealousy?
- ☐ Why could they not serve the LORD while keeping foreign gods?
- ☐ What does it mean to incline the whole heart toward the LORD?
- ☐ How would obedience show that their promise was sincere?
- ☐ Why did Joshua use spoken words, a written record, and a stone?
- ☐ What rivals can divide a person's loyalty to God today?
- ☐ How is dependence upon God different from trusting determination?

7) Speaking Practice

Choose a total of 2 from Speaking Practice and/or Scripture Discussion. Mark the activities you plan to use.

- ☐ Retell Joshua 24:18-27 in your own words.
- ☐ Explain Joshua's statement, 'You are not able to serve the LORD.'
- ☐ Describe what the people promised to do.
- ☐ Explain 'incline your heart to the LORD' in simple English.
- ☐ Speak for 30-60 seconds: How do actions reveal a sincere promise?
- ☐ Speak for 30-60 seconds: Why is divided loyalty dangerous?
- ☐ Describe a faithful commitment that requires more than words.
- ☐ Explain why the large stone was set up as a witness.

Language Coaching Tip

If a student gives a short answer, invite a fuller response: 'Can you tell me more?' 'Why do you think that?' 'Can you explain that another way?' or 'Can you give an example?' Correct gently and model the complete sentence when needed.

8) Writing Task

Choose 1. Mark the writing activity you plan to use in class or assign as homework.

- ☐ Option A: Summarize the conversation in 6-8 sentences.
- ☐ Option B: Explain why serving the LORD requires an undivided heart.
- ☐ Option C: Compare a sincere commitment with an easy promise.
- ☐ Option D: Use holy, forsake, witnesses, incline your heart, and covenant.

9) Wrap-Up

Wrap-Up

The people promised to serve the LORD, but Joshua warned them not to make that promise lightly. The LORD is holy and will not accept divided loyalty. The people were to put away foreign gods, incline their hearts toward the LORD, and obey His voice. Joshua made a covenant with them, wrote their words in the Book of the Law, and set up a large stone as a witness to their commitment.

Remember

"Faith does not merely promise to serve the Lord; faith puts away every rival and inclines the whole heart to Him."

Final Question

What rival must a person put away so the whole heart can be inclined toward the LORD?