



Session 1: Commissioned
Suggested Week of Use: December 4, 2016
Core Passages: Joshua 1:1-9

News Story Summary

In the Iraq town of Bartella everything lies in disarray. The town is located 13 miles from Mosul, where 10 years ago 35,000 Christians had lived. Today only 20 or 30 remain. ISIS ransacked the town of Bartella, including the St. George Church, where Priest Behnam Lalo stood grieving over the sight of burned Bibles and smashed crosses. The rubble and memories of past services in the church caused him to feel a crushing sadness.

Lalo touched the cross that he had picked up from the rubble and was filled with a resolve to rebuild and replace the church. He speculated that rebuilding the church building would be easy; however, rebuilding the faith of the people would be a challenge.

(For more on this story, search the Internet using the phrase “Christianity in peril after ISIS.”)

Focus Attention

Invite the group to talk about difficult experiences that may have changed the course of their lives such as a job loss, a violent storm, or other catastrophic event. Ask: *How did you grieve any loss or damage? What helped you to move forward with your life?* Read the news summary.

Explain that today’s session focuses on Joshua’s appointment as Israel’s new leader, following the death of Moses. He had the difficult job of leading the Israelites during a time when they were grieving over the loss of Moses and facing the challenge of occupying a new land.

Challenge

Ask group members to highlight some of the difficulties that lay ahead for Joshua as he began to lead the Israelites. Remind them of news summary about Behnam Lalo. Ask: *What would you share with Christians in Bartella from today’s study?* After allowing the group to offer ideas, ask: *How does what you shared with the Bartella believers relate to you as well?* Challenge group members to boldly trust God and follow God’s Word when faced with both new opportunities and difficulties.