

SESSION 2

JOSHUA: A FAITH ROOTED IN GOD'S WORD

Leader pages on pp. 106-109

THE POINT:
FAITH IS GROUNDED IN
OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S
WORD.

JOSHUA 1:1-9, 16-18

¹ After the death of Moses the LORD's servant, the LORD spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses's assistant:

² "Moses my servant is dead. Now you and all the people prepare to cross over the Jordan to the land I am giving the Israelites.

³ I have given you every place where the sole of your foot treads, just as I promised Moses.

⁴ Your territory will be from the wilderness and Lebanon to the great river, the Euphrates River—all the land of the Hittites—and west to the Mediterranean Sea.

⁵ No one will be able to stand against you as long as you live. I will be with you, just as I was with Moses. I will not leave you or abandon you.

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⁶ "Be strong and courageous, for you will distribute the land I swore to their ancestors to give them as an inheritance.

⁷ **Above all, be strong and very courageous to observe carefully the whole instruction my servant Moses commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right or the left, so that you will have success wherever you go.**

⁸ This book of instruction must not depart from your mouth; you are to meditate on it day and night so that you may carefully observe everything written in it. For then you will prosper and succeed in whatever you do.

⁹ Haven't I commanded you: be strong and courageous? Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go." . . .

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¹⁶ They answered Joshua, "Everything you have commanded us we will do, and everywhere you send us we will go.

¹⁷ We will obey you, just as we obeyed Moses in everything. Certainly the LORD your God will be with you, as he was with Moses.

¹⁸ Anyone who rebels against your order and does not obey your words in all that you command him, will be put to death. Above all, be strong and courageous!"

MEMORY VERSE

KEYWORDS

Prepare to cross over (v. 2)—The crossing of the Jordan River is both an echo of the crossing of the Red Sea in Exodus and a foreshadowing of Jesus's leading His people into the presence of God the Father.

Success (v. 7)—God's promise of success was that they would achieve this military victory as

they were obedient to God's commands.

Book of Instruction (v. 8)—At this point in Scripture, the Torah (the five books Moses wrote) was the only written revelation of God to His people. Also known as the Pentateuch.

HOW DO WE BUILD A STRONG FAITH IN GOD'S WORD?

Back in the early 90's, Publisher Clearinghouse was very popular. It offered the opportunity to become a millionaire. The TV ads were so entertaining and very persuasive to many. Some of us dreamed of the day when Ed McMahon would knock on our door with that big check! It was quite enticing. The catch is that you had to purchase magazine subscriptions. Some ate the bait and purchased countless magazine subscriptions to win big, while others did the minimal requirements. Sadly, the latest statistic I saw online said that it was a 1 in a 7 billion chance of winning.

As Christians, our odds are 1 in 1. Philippians 4:19 clearly states that God will supply our needs. It didn't say that there was a chance that God would take care of our needs. The Bible states that God will. All we need to do is be faithful. Romans 2:6 lets us know that God honors faithfulness. Today, as you read the lesson on Joshua, you will find it a great reminder of God's faithfulness when we are grounded in doing His work.

Encouraged by God's Word //

Joshua 1:1-5

Can you imagine being an eyewitness to some of the most incredible and historic events related

to the Exodus of the Hebrew nation from Egypt? Joshua witnessed the impact of the ten plagues on Pharaoh and Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, and Israel's forty-year struggle in the wilderness. Joshua also had a front-row seat watching Moses lead this traveling nation, serving as their prophet, leader, and judge. The Bible records more instances where God spoke to Moses, and Joshua knew the subject of many of their talks. God shared His law with Moses. God also emphasized Israel's need to obey His word, or they would suffer tremendous consequences.

Joshua witnessed God's faithfulness countless times during his time under the mentorship of Moses, but he also learned from Moses's mistakes. Some people may have considered Moses's death a critical setback in Israel's journey to enter the promised land, but Scripture records that his death had the opposite effect. God wouldn't allow Moses to enter the promised land because of disobedience. Israel got as close to the land as Moses's obedience would lead them, and now it was Joshua's turn. God's promise to enter the land of promise depended on God, not solely upon the strengths and weaknesses of his commissioned leaders. Remember, God expects our obedience.



THE POINT: FAITH IS GROUNDED IN OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S WORD.

Now, God would speak to Joshua as He had spoken to Moses. Joshua became the new leader of Israel, one of the biggest leadership transitions in the Bible. God's first spoken words to Joshua were crystal clear. Moses was dead, and Joshua was ordered to prepare his people to cross the Jordan River. After forty years of wandering in the desert, it was time for God's people to receive their gift of the land of promise.

Joshua must have experienced a great sense of relief when he heard God make some encouraging promises to him before the weight of his assignment began to press down upon his shoulders.

WHAT IMPORTANT SPIRITUAL TRUTHS HAVE YOU LEARNED THROUGH THE EXAMPLE OF OTHER BELIEVERS?

God's promise to Joshua can be summed up in three phrases:

- "I will give you victory on your journey."
- "Your victory has boundaries."
- "I will be with you and never abandon you."

Every step would be a gift. Every step would be a kept promise. Every step would be a victory over an enemy trying to keep God's promise out of the hands of His people. Israel's victory still required hardship that would result in doubt and fear, but experiencing God's victory would not only build a great nation in a new land but also develop the faith of Israel's leaders and people.

God gave Joshua the boundaries of the land. These boundaries remind us of the size and share of God's gift to Israel; they also gave Joshua the size and scope of his mission, as he prepared to enter and take possession of the land. Joshua received God's instructions to take this parcel of land, and God didn't want Joshua to take more or settle for less.

In Verse 5, God's words to Joshua may apply to Israel's outside opponents, but it's likely to refer to the people inside the nation of Israel, who may have wanted to remove Joshua as leader at some point in the future. There's a lesson for us here. God's protection and promise of standing by our side may be the only comfort leaders have when experiencing the stress and pain of leadership. But God's presence is always enough.

Ruminates on God's Word //

Joshua 1:6-9

Scripture includes well over six hundred conversations between God and His people. During this conversation, God told Joshua to be strong and courageous no fewer than three times.



DIGGING DEEPER THE WALL OF JERICO

In Joshua 6, the account of Joshua's conquest of Jericho can be found. The inhabitants of Jericho were well prepared for a potential attack. The actual city lay behind the massive wall that was constructed. Britannica said the wall was at least 13 feet high with a 28-foot mud-brick wall behind that. The wall was intended to protect the city and its water supply from invaders. The wall was constructed of mud bricks. It was virtually impossible for any outside force to penetrate this wall. The people during that time lacked the technology that we have today. They didn't have modern-day equipment, such as bulldozers or battle tanks, to penetrate the wall, nor did they have grenades or rockets to blow a hole in the wall. What they did have was greater, El Shaddai—the Lord God Almighty. The story of the Wall of Jericho is a reminder that nothing can stop God's power.

What impossible situation in your life has God's power overcome?

First, God told Joshua to be strong and courageous because Joshua would distribute the land to the tribes to fulfill God's promise. In other words, God would give Joshua victory. History proves that God's people didn't enter the land unnoticed or unopposed. God's gift of the land to Israel would cost them people and treasure. For the conquered kingdoms, the price would be more costly. Joshua would need strength and courage to lead this wandering band of twelve tribes into a hostile land, follow God's orders, and fight the necessary battles. Joshua's faith grew with each step as he witnessed God keeping His promises.

Joshua was a seasoned commanding general, but God knew Joshua would need more than to lean on his own experience. No, God's second admonition to be strong and courageous concerned Joshua's obedience to God's word. As you read Joshua 1:7-8, please don't skip over the words "observe carefully." A simple understanding of these two words is that God wanted Joshua, as the commanding general and leader of God's chosen people, to dedicate his time and attention to the observance of God's instructions. The keys to victory were not a bigger army or a more experienced general; the key to victory was for Joshua to do exactly what God had told Moses. Their success would be directly related to the degree of Joshua's obedience to God's Word.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO OBEY THE WHOLE INSTRUCTION OF GOD?



God continued to expand His expectations for Joshua regarding the amount of time and attention Joshua gave to God's instructions to Moses. God doesn't want robotic obedience to His word. He wanted Joshua to put these words into his heart, continuously thinking about them and putting them into daily use. God wanted His instructions obeyed in a heartfelt way; He would then bless, protect, and grant success to Joshua.

God's final command to be strong and courageous relates to Joshua's interpersonal struggles as the leader. The old saying is true, "It's lonely at the top." Joshua was God's appointed successor of Moses, and although Joshua had been promised victory based upon his obedience to God's word, he would still experience fear and discouragement.

Every person who places their faith in God and His promises must be reminded that their faith is not a game of chance. God's Word is straightforward and clear. If you find yourself in a difficult season, remember to listen to God's promises of victory; they will chase away the fear and discouragement.

Live God's Word // Joshua 1:16-18

Fresh from his conversation with God, Joshua immediately spoke to the officers of the people and instructed them to prepare the camp for the crossing of the Jordan River. They would have three days.

Joshua would obey God's commands—to be strong and courageous—and remember God's promise of success, even if the people turned against him. This was his opportunity to show everyone the impact of obeying God's instructions. Leaders can sometimes stumble in their followers' eyes when the mission's result becomes more important than the means by which they achieved it.

When Joshua's officers pledged their obedience to his leadership and compared their relationship to the one the officers shared with Moses, Joshua may have been reminded for a second time of the fiery nature of that connection. But on a deeper level, it may have reminded him of God's relationship with Moses.

THE POINT: FAITH IS GROUNDED IN OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S WORD.

Scripture teaches that Moses was a servant of God. On numerous occasions, he was in the presence of God to record God's law and instructions for the people to obey. But the events recorded in Numbers 20:3-5 prove that Moses was not above the law.

Did Joshua wonder if his faith in God would be enough? Was his faith in God, or his obedience at least, greater than that of his mentor? If it wasn't, he knew there would be consequences. Joshua's officers reminded him of God's constant presence, as they began their mission. He knew his faith in God's words, demonstrated by obedience to God's words, would influence how his men and the nation obeyed God. Everyone would be watching his every step and listening to his every word.

Joshua wanted to obey God and demonstrate his faith to those who would take his place one day. Your faith is on display as well. You may not be leading a nation out of the wilderness and into the promised land, but your example impacts the people who will follow after you. So, let's set an example for others.

WHAT ARE SOME WAYS OUR FAITH CAN SET AN EXAMPLE FOR OTHERS?

DID YOU KNOW?

The life and ministry of Joshua may be highlighted in the book named after him, however, his ministry began long before. In the Book of Exodus, we see that Joshua was born a slave in Egypt and was redeemed in the exodus of the Israelites (Ex. 5-15). He was chosen by Moses as an assistant and was present on Mount Sinai when Moses went to receive the law (Ex. 24:13). Later in the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy, Joshua was chosen as one of the spies to scout out the land of Canaan (Num. 13:8,16). He along with Caleb were the only two spies that came back with a positive report on the land (Num. 13-14). He was mentored by Moses and chosen to lead Israel as Moses's successor. At the beginning of the book of Joshua, we see the Lord reaffirm him as the leader after Moses and encourages him multiple times throughout chapter one to be strong and courageous.

Biblical Truth: God has plans for each of us from the foundation of the world (Eph. 2:10).

How can you be strong and courageous in your ministry assignment this week?

LIVE IT

How does obedience to God's Word reflect our faith in Him?

Faith steps out based on what God says, and it is through the Bible, His Word to us, that we discover His commands and will. Faith is grounded in obedience to God's Word. Choose one of the following applications this week:

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- **Observe.** Choose someone in your life who walks with God and carefully observe how this person follows Him. Perhaps you could shadow this individual for a day and learn from him or her.
- **Focus.** Focus your attention on God's Word, and your faith will grow in a manner that pleases God. Read, study, and make God's Word the foundation of your faith. If you don't have a plan for Bible study, ask for help from your group leader.
- **Display.** Let your faith practice be an example for other people to follow. Seek out others to mentor and be their example of living a life of faith. Remember to be strong and courageous!

DAILY READINGS

1. A JOURNEY OF TRUST // PROVERBS 3:5-6

The best teachers aren't simply skilled communicators. They're leaders, living by the words they teach. In essence, they teach through the eyes of lived experience. Joshua had watched Moses live out obedience for many years, but with Moses now gone, walking it out as leader took on a whole new meaning. Still, Joshua understood that he could firmly trust the word of the Lord and that as long as he did, his journey would be one of faithful anticipation of what would come next. Had Joshua leaned to his own understanding, based on what he saw or the circumstances against him, he would have missed experiencing the awesome wonder of God's power. When we acknowledge God as Sovereign and allow Him to be Lord, the journey not only gets better, but the results are not up to us.

Be encouraged. The journey only gets better from here!

2. A FAITHFUL RESPONSE // JEREMIAH 29:11

Throughout Moses's life, he'd seen God's hand of provision and protection again and again. He understood the result of his obedience. No matter the hardship, he remained encouraged by the Word, knowing that with God, there was always "a future and a hope" (Jer. 29:11). As we grow in the Word and become more acquainted with the voice of God, we too, can know with assurance that our hope and our future reside in Him as well. No matter His leading, we need not fear obedience, for our God is just as faithful today as He was in the days of Moses.

Faithful obedience produces faithful results.

3. MEDITATE ON THE WORD // JOSHUA 1:8

There is nothing automatic about our journey with God. True faith and spiritual growth development happen with intentional time in the Word. Think about it like this. Pasture animals like cows are known for "chewing the cud," which means they

chew partially digested food again and again. This idea of rumination describes God's process for mediating His Word effectively. It's not something to be visited occasionally, only when we need it; but rather something we're reading and meditating on continuously. God promises that when we obey His Word success will follow.

Properly ingesting the Word requires time and intentionality.

4. A FEELING IN REVERSE // JOSHUA 1:6-7,9

In the days ahead, we will have to follow the Word of God in ever-increasing measure. Doing so will require courage, especially in the face of fear, which is simply faith in reverse, opposite of God. It's one of Satan's favorite mental weapons. Knowing this, God commanded Joshua to be "strong and courageous" three times because He knew that what lay ahead would cause him to feel neither strong nor courageous (Josh. 1:6-7,9). God's intentional repetition provides a clue as to how strongly Joshua would feel like doing the opposite. The same is true for us sometimes, but we can overcome fear with our faith.

Being strong and courageous doesn't mean that we don't experience fear. We just don't allow it to hinder our obedience.

5. SUPERCHARGE YOUR FAITH // JOSHUA 1:16-18

There is something magnetic about Scripture in its ability to draw us closer to God. It's like being connected to a supercharged battery. The more time we are connected, the more of a charge we carry. For believers, that power source is God. The more we spend time with God, the more we allow Him to use us to draw people to Him. The Israelites didn't follow Joshua because of his likability; they followed Joshua because God was with him. God supercharged their faith in the process, and He will do the same for us the more time we spend in His Word. When we do this, remaining strong and courageous becomes easier.

Overcome fear with supercharged faith!