

Joshua Leads Courageously

Devotional Reading: Daniel 10:18–21

Background Scripture: Exodus 19–24; Deuteronomy 31:1–8; 34:1–12; Joshua 1

Today's Scripture: Joshua 1:1–11

I. Commission Joshua 1:1–6

1 Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD it came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying,

2 Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel.

3 Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.

4 From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast.

5 There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

6 Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swore unto their fathers to give them.

1. *Moses* dies at age 120, and what follows takes place after that death. The name *Joshua* appears more than two dozen times in the Pentateuch, the designation for the

first five books of the Old Testament. He is further identified as being *the son of Nun*, a descendent of Ephraim.

The word translated as the noun *minister* is actually a verb in the Hebrew text. This fact highlights Joshua's service to his elder and mentor. Joshua had done so since his youth. The designation draws a parallel between Joshua's service to Moses and Moses' position as *the servant of the Lord*, although the Hebrew words translated "minister" and "servant" are different.

2. The word of the Lord to Joshua affirms a change of leadership for the Israelites. *Moses* is *dead*, and now Joshua will become a leader who will speak for the Lord and guide *the children of Israel* into the land. Centuries earlier, God had promised Abram that his descendants would be given the land of Canaan. God reiterated the same promise to his son and grandson as well. Moses received the same promise when the Lord called him to lead the Israelites to a land "flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:8).

This crossing would have been relatively simple at the end of the dry season, as the *Jordan* River would be a quiet stream. However, it is now the end of the spring rainy season (Joshua 4:19). Despite these challenges, God will make the crossing possible. This miracle will validate Joshua's leadership and demonstrate

the people's willingness to obey the Lord and take *the land* for themselves.

3. The Lord reiterates to Joshua the promises that He made to *Moses* regarding the land in Deuteronomy 11:24. The Israelites do not yet possess the land, but to receive such a promise from the Lord is almost the same as holding the title deed to it. Although conflict and battles will occur, the victory ultimately belongs to the Lord and His people.

4. The description of the extent of the territory aligns with previous statements. The description begins in the southernmost region of the land (*the wilderness*) and extends to the northwest, where the mountains of *Lebanon* are located. To the northeast and east is the *Euphrates* River, often referred to simply as “the river” (Exodus 23:31) or “the flood” (Joshua 24:14–15). The northern area is summarized by the phrase *all the land of the Hittites*. At the time of Joshua, in approximately the fourteenth century BC, the Hittites are a rising power. They controlled regions of what is now modern-day Turkey. The western boundary, *the great sea*, refers to the Mediterranean Sea.

5. When God issues commands, He often follows them with supporting information that provides assurance. The Israelites will not acquire the land through their own strength. Instead, they will take possession of it solely because the Lord has granted it to them.

This instance is not the first time the Lord has promised His presence to Joshua (see Deuteronomy 31:23). By ensuring that no one will *be able to stand* in Joshua's way, the Lord guarantees the fulfillment of His promises and presents Himself as a warrior fighting on behalf of His people.

Joshua has already experienced the realities of God's promise. During the final days of Moses, the Israelites captured sixty cities in the region east of Gal-

ilee. Additionally, the Israelites did not suffer any casualties in a previous battle with the Midianites.

6. A form of the command *be strong and of a good courage* appears a total of eleven times in the Old Testament.

Dictionaries offer several definitions of *courage*. A summary of them would be that courage is “the quality that enables one to meet danger and difficulties with firmness or valor, despite feelings of fear or inadequacy.” Joshua may have feelings of fear or inadequacy as he leads the people. His mentor, Moses, definitely felt inadequate (Exodus 3:11).

II. Command Joshua 1:7–9

7 Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.

8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

9 Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

7a. The imperative *be strong and very courageous* is important enough to be repeated. This command serves as the “marching order” for Joshua and the Israelites preparing to enter the land of Canaan. To be cowardly instead of courageous would reveal a lack of trust in God.

7b. Joshua will model courage and

success by obeying *the law* the Lord gave the Israelites. The practices and promises offered by the pagan people who inhabit the land will be very enticing, as they already have been. But Joshua must be determined not to go with them. His trust is not to be in a smorgasbord belief system—some of this and a little of that. He cannot swerve in any direction so as to taste what looks appealing.

As Joshua considers this requirement, perhaps he thinks of God's command found in Deuteronomy 28:14. Joshua's courageous leadership depends primarily on his willingness to obey the Lord.

8. The warning that *this book . . . shall not depart out of thy mouth* may sound somewhat unusual at first—as if Joshua should refrain from discussing *the law*. Joshua is to “keep” the law in his mouth so that he can do three important things: reflect on it, obey it, and enjoy the blessings of obedience. Success in conquering the promised land depends on this!

Joshua will know the contents of the law by meditating on it *day and night*. As the newly appointed leader, he will need to make significant decisions throughout each day, but those decisions must be evaluated in light of what God has instructed.

The words *prosperous* and *success* each occur dozens of times in the Old Testament. But this is the only place where those two Hebrew words occur together. To be prosperous is not necessarily referring to financial success. Instead, it addresses the broader concept of “flourishing.”

9. The Lord reassures Joshua by posing a rhetorical question that should remove any doubt about the outcome. In this case, the Lord intends for the people's obedience to fulfill what He has planned for centuries: a provision of a particular land to Abraham and his descendants.

This is the third time in this chapter that the Lord encourages Joshua to *be*

strong and of a good courage as he assumes leadership of the people. Moses had given Joshua the same challenge when appointing him as successor (Deuteronomy 31:7, 23). While Joshua previously benefited from the support and wisdom of Moses, that era has now changed. Joshua is on his own—with the promises of God as his blessed assurance.

III. Crossing Joshua 1:10–11

10 Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying,

11 Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which the LORD your God giveth you to possess it.

10. Joshua's commands to *the officers* demonstrate his trust in God and willingness to begin entering the land.

11a. When the verse before us is combined with the verse just before it, a three-fold order of leadership for the Israelites is apparent: (1) The Lord directs Joshua; (2) Joshua gives commands to officers; and (3) the officers ensure that *the people* receive proper direction. In modern military parlance, this is called “the chain of command.”

11b. As Joshua receives his marching orders from God, the Israelites are camped on the plains of Moab. That area is east of the *Jordan River* and just north of the Dead Sea. Historical hindsight tells us that their need to take food (*victuals*) is only a temporary, in-between step because of the coming shift from receiving manna to being able to eat from the produce of the land they are to enter. When the people approached the land decades earlier, they had backed down. This time, however, is to be different.

Involvement Learning

Joshua Leads Courageously

Into the Lesson

That took courage!

Do an internet search for a news story describing an event that required a courageous response from an individual or group. What made the individual(s) in the example courageous?

The individuals in these examples all demonstrated courage. In today's study, we'll review a passage of Scripture that illustrates courage and obedience to God.

Into the Word

Read Joshua 1:1–11. What are the key directives of God's call to Joshua?

In what ways is God's call of Joshua similar to God's call of Moses in Exodus 3 and Deuteronomy 11:8–32?

In what ways are the calls different?

Summarize the commands given to Joshua in Joshua 1:1–11.

Key Text

Have not I commanded thee?
Be strong and of a good courage;
be not afraid, neither be thou
dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with
thee whithersoever thou goest.
—Joshua 1:9

Summarize the resources, practices, and attitudes that Joshua needed to obey God successfully.

Summarize the results God promised would come to Joshua through his obedience.

Into Life

Write a definition of the word *courage*.

Choose one of the following contexts and write a way to act courageously in that context.

*Work. Church. Family.
Neighborhood. Politics.*

Thought to Remember

Be courageous as God leads you!