

October 21st LEADERSHIP TRANSFER

"Moses spoke to the LORD, saying, 'Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the LORD may not be as sheep that have no shepherd.' So the LORD said to Moses, 'Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him. Make him stand before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation, and you shall commission him in their sight.'" **NUMBERS 27:15-19**

I've just finished watching a Nick Saban documentary from ESPN. Saban won a record seven national titles as head football coach for LSU (one title) and Alabama (six titles). I first heard of him when I was in high school in Michigan. You see, Saban coached the "other brother" Michigan State Spartans for a few years before he left for LSU. I always thought that he couldn't cut it in the Big Ten with Michigan State, so I never really was a fan. However, you can't argue with the truth: his record as college coach was 292-71-1. Can you imagine having to be the coach that comes after him? The expectations would be ridiculous. Well, college football is nothing compared to the real leaders that we find in the book of Numbers. Yet, the great leader Moses is ready to die as the people prepare to enter the Promised Land. There is an inevitable leadership transfer. What does God teach us here?

Here in Numbers 27, you get a true sense of Moses' heart. It's the heart of a shepherd. He's led these people for 80 years and is barred from the Promised Land. Indeed, if we step into his sandals, it would be easy to complain that we aren't allowed into the land. However, James Boice points out wisely that there's not a hint of self-pity in Moses here. All he cares about are the people. In fact, he's the one that suggests to God to have a succession plan in place. Read again Moses words to see if you've heard them before: *"that the congregation of the Lord may not be as sheep that have no shepherd."* Sound familiar? That's right, Jesus has the same compassion as He sees the people without a shepherd.

Who does God appoint as the next leader? None other than Joshua, son of nun. The same Joshua (along with Caleb) that gave a faithful response for the ability to carry out the Promised Land conquest. How does God describe Joshua? God calls him a man in whom is the Spirit. The Holy Spirit indwells Joshua, which was abnormal for the Holy Spirit to do with Old Testament saints. The first prerequisite that God has is to be godly. We've seen a glimpse of Joshua's godliness besides being a trusting spy: he did not depart from the tent of meeting after Moses stopped meeting with God. Everyone else went back to business...except for Joshua. He wanted to be close with Yahweh.

It's key to note here that Joshua and Moses are different people. Some of you might read that and say, "Well, that's obvious!" But don't miss the point here. Contrary to what you'll see in Cecille B. DeMille's Ten Commandments, Moses wasn't a military commander or builder of cities. The closest he gets to battles is when he sees the battle from the mountain top and God uses the staff as a holy helper to aid the Israelites. However, Joshua is a warrior. He commands the Israelite army as they conquer the Promised Land. You see men, God uses different people to accomplish his purposes. I recall at my former church sitting in one of the elders' meetings where they were discussing the preaching qualifications of the next pastor. One member was determined to find a dynamic speaker that held great eye contact. Indeed, these skills can be used by God, but so can a preacher that never once looks up from the page! Jonathan Edwards, preacher of one of the most famous sermons in US History, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" preached that entire sermon without looking up from his preaching manuscript! God isn't limited by human ability. In fact, this was never about people. It's always about our God. Remember what Jesus said about if people don't praise then the rocks would cry out? God gives His grace to us to use us, and we need His grace every day to live for Him. Take encouragement men that the same God of Moses and Joshua is your God. He gives you exactly what you need today to serve Him. Find your hope not in your qualifications or personality, but in the God who made you and called you for His purpose—to make Him famous!

Spend some time listing out some of your heroes from the Bible. What did they do that made them so special and what unites all of them? Ask the Lord to use you where He's placed you today, for His glory.

For Further Reading: Joshua 1:1-9