

Taking First Steps with God: Lessons from Joshua's Leadership

Life is filled with first steps - moments when we move from the familiar into the unknown. Whether it's starting kindergarten, beginning college, getting married, becoming a parent, or stepping into a new calling, these transitions often bring a mixture of wonder, hesitancy, and fear.

What Does the Bible Say About Taking First Steps?

The book of Joshua provides a powerful example of someone called to take significant first steps. After Moses' death, Joshua faced the daunting task of leading the Israelites into the Promised Land. This wasn't just any leadership transition - Joshua was stepping into the shoes of one of history's greatest leaders to accomplish what Moses himself couldn't complete.

In Joshua 1:1-9, we see God's instructions to Joshua as he prepared for this monumental responsibility:

"After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, 'Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel... Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.'" - Joshua 1:1-2, 9 (ESV)

Why Does God Repeat Himself in Joshua 1?

A careful reading of Joshua 1 reveals that God repeats certain commands multiple times. He tells Joshua three times to "be strong and courageous" and twice reminds him of God's presence. This repetition isn't accidental - it reveals the emotional reality of taking first steps into God's calling.

The Universal Experience of First Steps

Whether we're talking about a toddler's first physical steps or major life transitions, the emotions are remarkably similar:

- Wonder: What possibilities await in this new space?
- Hesitancy: What will happen when I get there?
- Fear: What if I fall and can't get back up?

These same emotions accompany our spiritual first steps throughout life.

How Does God Prepare Us for First Steps?

God's instructions to Joshua reveal three essential preparations for taking first steps in faith:

Remember God's Faithfulness

God begins by reminding Joshua of His track record. He points to fulfilled promises and demonstrates His consistency:

"Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses... Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you." - Joshua 1:3, 5 (ESV)

When facing new challenges, we must remember how God has been faithful in the past. His promises don't fail, drop, or fall apart. Unlike human promises, God's faithfulness is absolute and unchanging.

Meditate on God's Word

God instructs Joshua to keep the law constantly before him:

"This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success." - Joshua 1:8 (ESV)

Regular meditation on Scripture serves two purposes: it reminds us of God's promises and faithfulness, and it provides direction for our path forward. When we're grounded in God's word, we won't be easily turned "to the right hand or to the left."

Anticipate God's Presence

The most encouraging promise comes in the final verse:

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." - Joshua 1:9 (ESV)

This promise of God's presence transforms everything. Without God's presence, Joshua would have failed immediately. With it, he could accomplish the impossible task of leading an entire nation into their inheritance.

What Does This Mean for Christians Today?

Just as Joshua received a mission to lead Israel into the Promised Land, Christians have received the Great Commission:

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." - Matthew 28:19-20 (ESV)

Notice the parallel - Jesus ends with the same promise of presence that God gave Joshua. Whether you're a lawyer in an office, a doctor in a hospital, or a student in school, God wants you to be a disciple-maker in that place.

How Do We Apply This to Major Life Transitions?

Life transitions - whether graduation, marriage, parenthood, career changes, or moves - all require the same spiritual preparation:

1. Remember God's faithfulness in past seasons of your life
2. Ground yourself in Scripture to maintain proper direction and perspective
3. Anticipate God's presence in your new circumstances

These aren't just nice thoughts - they're essential spiritual disciplines that provide the strength and courage needed for significant life changes.

What About Fear and Uncertainty?

God's repeated command to "be strong and courageous" acknowledges that fear is natural when facing the unknown. The antidote isn't to deny these feelings but to remember that God's presence goes with us.

When we've experienced God's faithfulness and tasted His presence in our lives, we don't want to go anywhere without Him. Every day we can wake up anticipating that He will be with us, because He has promised to be.

Life Application

This week, identify one "first step" you're facing - whether it's a major life transition or simply a new day with its challenges. Apply Joshua's preparation:

1. Spend time remembering specific ways God has been faithful to you in the past
2. Choose a passage of Scripture to meditate on daily this week
3. Begin each day by acknowledging God's presence with you

Ask yourself these questions:

- What first steps is God calling me to take right now?
- How has God's faithfulness in my past prepared me for current challenges?
- Am I regularly grounding myself in Scripture for direction and encouragement?
- Do I truly believe and live as if God's presence goes with me everywhere?

Remember, just as God equipped Joshua for an impossible task, He equips us for whatever He calls us to do. Be strong and courageous - the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.