

# ***Joshua: Walking by Faith, Growing in Grace***

## *The Call of Joshua*

Joshua 1:1-9

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HDBC

The first five chapters of Joshua outline the preparations for conquering the land. It is only in chapter 6 that the warfare actually begins. However, these five chapters are vital. Preparation is important. There were several things that needed to take place before the people would be ready to enter the land and take possession of it.

**First on the list**, would be the establishment of a new leader. Moses has died. He was the only leader they had known. What would happen now? We know from Scripture and from experience that God is never without a plan. And His plans are not derailed by the death of key leaders. As one writer put it, *God's fidelity does not hinge on the achievement of men, however gifted they may be, nor does it evaporate in the face of funerals or rivers.*

God would continue to accomplish His purpose through His people. He stepped in and appointed the new leader. This was not a democratic process. There was no debate. God simply made the decision.

This first section, verses 1-9, reveals a conversation between God and Joshua. It would not be the last. It points to the fact that the call was very personal and very direct.

### **1. The Boundaries of the Land (1-4)**

From the very beginning, let us understand the importance of two things. **First, there is the Word of God.** God speaks, revealing his plans, intentions, desires. **Second, there is the response of a person.** In this case, Joshua responded immediately and obediently to the word of God. This is the real foundation for the life of victory and joy. Hearing from God, and obeying his voice. **It's simple, but not easy!**

**What did God say?** Two things:

**1) *Moses is dead.***

Things are about to change. It will no longer be business as usual. The one who has led you for the past forty years is gone. It happens all the time in all kinds of settings. Coaches move to other teams. Political leaders are defeated. Pastors retire. Leaders die.

This was his announcement that a new leader was being chosen. It would quickly become clear that the new leader would be Joshua. He did not have to wait long to find out what his first assignment would be.

**2) *Therefore, arise and cross the Jordan.***

This is a clear, practical command. But it illustrates a wonderful truth. Some of God's promises are unconditional, yet they require a faith response from those to whom the promises have been made.

**The key focus of these first four verses is the promise concerning the land.** The Lord is reassuring Joshua that the death of Moses in no way canceled His promise to bring the people into Canaan. He will fulfill His promise.

What God told Joshua in verses 3-4 is almost identical to what Moses told the people in Deuteronomy 11:24. This is another indication of God's intention to carry out His promises completely.

**Verse 4 is a map of sorts of the land.** General boundaries. North and south are given first. The desert to the south and Lebanon to the north. The Euphrates River would be the eastern boundary with the Mediterranean Sea forming the western border. This is a general summary of the borders of the land painted with a broad stroke.

**2. The Protection of the Leader (5-6)**

Next, there is a promise of God concerning the leader.

Not only would the people, inherit the land, but Joshua would be an able leader. It must have been an intimidating thing to follow Moses. Who could hope to be as effective as this giant of the faith? But Joshua is encouraged by God. ***You will do well because I will be with you.***

This was a heart-warming promise to Joshua. God moves from speaking of His promises to the people at-large, to a specific promise to His chosen leader. It is doubly important to note that God not only promised to be with Joshua, but to be with him ***as He had been with Moses.*** Joshua would not be a second-string player. He would give the same attention to and protection of Joshua as he had Moses.

Because of this great promise, Joshua would be able to answer God's challenge to ***be strong and courageous***, a phrase used four times in this chapter.

As leader, it would be very important for Joshua to have strength and courage. ***Strength to carry the load. Courage to stay the course.*** He would be the out-front man. It is interesting that he had already proven to have these qualities. But, as leader, the pressures would be greater. The tests would be more difficult. Courage is an essential ingredient for effective leadership. But just what is courage?

***Courage is being scared to death but saddling up anyway. John Wayne***

***Courage is doing what you're afraid to do. There can be no courage unless you're scared. Eddie Rickenbacker***

***Courage is looking at the open door of a blazing furnace, yet saying to Nebuchadnezzar, ***we will not bow to your idol, even if it costs us our lives.******

***Courage is stepping onto the field against Goliath with only a sling and a few stones, but with the conviction that God will win.***

### 3. The Importance of Obedience (7-8)

God repeats his call for strength and courage, adding the word very to courageous, giving it emphasis. He then, quickly offers the key to Joshua's strength and courage. The key would be **the Word of God**.

**Joshua knew** the law of God which had been given through Moses. He knew that it was the will of God. It was a clear guidebook for life. The degree to which he followed that law, God's word, would be the degree to which he would be strong and courageous. In other words, there is a direct relationship between the two. If he keeps the law, it will lead to success. The word for success could also be translated **wisdom**. It is easy to see how the word could be translated either way.

Notice that Joshua was **not to deviate from the law even in the slightest manner**. Not to the left or the right. He was to be completely obedient to the Word. So, not only was **courage** an important quality, but also **obedience**.

One man could never seem to get his son to keep his room clean. The boy would always put it off as long as he could and often would never get around to it. Eventually he joined the Marines. When he returned from boot camp, his dad asked what he had learned. "I learned what 'now' means"

Instant obedience is the only kind of obedience there is; delayed obedience is disobedience. Thomas a Kempis

**Verse 8 intensifies this truth.** How would Joshua be sure to keep the law? He would do so if he would keep the law **in his mouth and in his heart**. In his mouth surely refers to the call to teach the Word of God. To share it with others. It also refers to just talking about the Word. It should be a part of our normal conversation.

To meditate on it, refers to hiding it in one's heart. To memorizing and musing over it. Thinking of it.

It is clear. The key to Joshua's success would be his obedience to God.

Roger Staubach who led the Dallas Cowboys to the World Championship in '71 admitted that he was frustrated when he was no longer able to call his own plays, which QBs historically had done. That year coach Landry sent in every play.

He told Roger when to pass, when to run and only in emergency situations could he change the play (and he had better be right!). Roger later said, ***I faced up to the issue of obedience. Once I learned to obey there was harmony, fulfillment, and victory.***

#### **4. The Promise of God's Presence (9)**

This section closes with a promise about the Lord, Himself. It is actually a repeat of something said earlier in verse 5. The command to be strong is offered a third time. God also calls upon Joshua to avoid trembling or being dismayed.

**Why? Because the Lord would be with him.** God promised His personal presence, protection and provision. Remember, this is the God who brought them out of Egypt, through Red Sea, through wilderness. God who conquered kings, caused earthquakes, provided manna and quail for food, brought water from a rock. He had a pretty good track record with Joshua.

A television program preceding the 1988 Winter Olympics featured blind skiers being trained for slalom skiing, impossible as that sounds. Paired with sighted skiers, the blind skiers were taught on the flats how to make right and left turns.

When that was mastered, they were taken to the slalom slope, where their sighted partners skied beside them shouting, "Left!" and "Right!" As they obeyed the commands, they were able to negotiate the course

and cross the finish line, depending solely on the sighted skiers' word. It was either complete trust or catastrophe.

What a vivid picture of the Christian life! In this world, we are in reality blind about what course to take. We must rely solely on the Word of the only One who is truly sighted—God Himself. His Word gives us the direction we need to finish the course.

Whether God is calling you to be a leader, out front, setting the pace, or is calling you to follow a leader and serve in relative obscurity, the principles for success are the same.

Be strong and courageous, trusting His word for direction.  
Be strong and courageous, trusting His presence no matter where you are.

**Whatever path the Lord is calling you to walk next . . .**

Step out in courage.

Step out in obedience.

Step out in faith.