



Moving Forward When What's Next Is Hard

#3 In the What's Next Series Moving Forward When What's Next Is Hard

Forest Park Church

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Main Focus:

Joshua 1:1–9

When seasons change and leadership shifts, God remains faithful and calls His people forward.

Transitions may feel unsettling, but they never signal God's absence. They often become the very place where His faithfulness is revealed most clearly.

Intro — The Acting President?

Some of the information below was taken from the National Constitution Center (Scott Bomboy is the editor in chief of the National Constitution Center).

In 1841, the newly elected President of the United States, William Henry Harrison, died about a month after becoming President.

Of course this was a tragic and unexpected event that the American people would be concerned about and pay attention to, as the saddened nation tried to figure out what to do next.

You would think this kind of thing would have been well planned for in the constitution, with a road map of how to get the vice president into office. But up until that point there was a lack of clarity about it.

Technically, the Constitution never spelled out how a Vice President would become President if a President died, resigned or was unable to perform the office's duty.

So, as would in most cases like this one, a political debate arose in the midst of the crisis.

*Congress debated about what powers John Tyler had and what he should be called (**Acting President, President or Vice President**). Tyler settled the debate by asking a local judge to administer the presidential oath, and he fought all attempts by his many political foes to treat him as anything but the legitimate President of the United States.*

The Tyler Precedent stood fast in many presidential cases until we fast forward to the day JFK was assassinated.

Technically, the Constitution still hadn't solved the issue.

With Kennedy's unexpected death, the need for a clear way to determine presidential succession, especially with the new reality of the Cold War and its frightening technologies, forced Congress into action.

As the country came to grips with the assassination, Johnson made sure the moment when he took the oath of office, about two hours after Kennedy's death, was documented, so the nation knew a constitutional change of office had taken place.

Johnson stood by his wife, Jackie Kennedy, and Judge Sarah T. Hughes as he took the oath at Love Field in Dallas in a now-iconic photograph.

But Kennedy's sudden passing accelerated the argument about this kind of constitutional change, and it wasn't until July 1965 that Nebraska, became the first to ratify the proposed amendment. Nevada was the 38th state to ratify the amendment, in February 1967, making it the law of the land.

Section 1 of the 25th Amendment finally allowed the vice president to become the president under these kinds of circumstances.

Over 100 years later and after 6-8 circumstances confronted the same constitutional issue, congress finally changed what was hindering new leaders from taking office in a constitutional way.

It's hard to move forward in the midst of chaos.

Changing leadership is hard.

Making decisions that impact a larger group is difficult. And these kinds of changes always tend to make us nervous.

We might get a little uneasy. The future doesn't seem as clear as it was yesterday, and security feels as though it's been thrown out the window.

We come to these kinds of moments in life where it feels like we could ask questions like...

- Now what...?
- What if...?
- How will we...?
- Is this going to...?

Fear, anxiety, nervousness, unexpected surprises, lack of security; they all come creeping in, and maybe we struggle to think otherwise.

- **What do we do when what's next is hard?**
- **How to we learn to move in the world of the unknown?**

I. What's Next Is Never A Surprise to God.

No uncertainty, great or small, has ever surprised our God. God deals with problems in His timing.

Joshua 1

1 After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, 2 “Moses my servant is dead.

Joshua 1 opens with a simple but heavy statement: “Moses my servant is dead.”

If you were hoping for sugar coating, or looking for easy language, you would miss out here.

There's no easing into it. No soft language. One season has ended, and it's time to usher in the next one.

Moses—the leader, the voice, the steady presence—is gone. And with him goes a sense of familiarity and certainty. Joshua now stands at the edge of the unknown, carrying the weight of leadership and the question every transition brings:

- What happens now?

What happens now for us?

Maybe you're in a season where your eyes feel more and more opened to the lack of control we have over many things related to the state of the world.

You see violence and evil, corruption and darkness all around.

You worry about friends, family, kids, loved ones.

You think about bad things happening, and you do everything you can to turn it off and ignore the realities of this life.

It's hard to look at and think about those realities.

But being a Christian does more than just give us a meaningful life...

A. Our Perspective In Christ Prepares Us For Problems.

John 16:33

33 I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

For many of us, christianity may have originally felt like a vessel to join into that would keep us shielded and carry us through this life untouched, into the next.

This perspective is sneaky and it comes from our own personal fear of life and the damages of sin.

Sin is destructive, and I think the more we understand what it does in the world, we learn to hate it.

But we live in a sin filled reality.

We have not yet fully escaped the pangs of a world that is heavily influenced and controlled by the effects of sin.

This is quite discouraging for us to think about as christians.

It's not fun for any of us to see the reality of it and face the fact that the world is broken in the ways that it is.

God's Straight Forward Response.

But just as it did no good for Joshua to receive a sugar coated version of what had taken place with Moses, it does us no good to ignore the reality of life here on earth.

Jesus doesn't shy away from this reality with His disciples when the time comes for things to run their course.

He prepares them with the words we find in John 16:33.

"in me you may have peace."

Search far and wide, high and low, this way, that way, and all around.

You will not find peace like the peace that comes in Christ.

- Hiding ourselves from reality only sets us up for more of a shock wave when hard things come.
- Making a practice of ignoring problems that actually exist, or lying about them in our minds to make ourselves feel better, only halts the preparation for a life well lived.

You might say:

- How do we focus on what is good, right and true like Philippians 4 instructs us, and do this as well, not ignoring problems and warnings of evil?

Jesus warns His disciples:

John 16:1-4

16 *“I have said all these things to you to keep you from falling away. 2 They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. 3 And they will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me. 4 But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you.*

There's something to be said here about the difference between taking an avoidance approach, ignoring problematic realities and "tapping out" of an issue, and taking a trust-filled, giving it to God approach.

Being able to be emotionally engaged without being emotionally damaged or attached is quite a skill.

Christ doesn't call us to be emotionally asleep, but He also doesn't ask us to solve all of the issues in the world.

Some might think christians are just flat out crazy...

or maybe trust is a greater investment of energy than worry.

Be Ready

We are called to be prepared and to be ready to give an answer, an account, and witness to the love of Christ.

There is no replacement for a relentless trust in our Heavenly Father, no matter what lies ahead.

We take heart in what's to come. We're not excited about problems, we just can't waste precious resources on worrying about what is temporary anymore.

And it would do us no good to do so anyway.

Our peace is not dependent on a circumstance, but on the joy of knowing Christ.

B. God Continues to Lead His People

Joshua 1:2-3

...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. 3 Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses.

God does not deny loss—but He does not let loss define the future.

Moses may have been gone but God continues to work in this story through His servant Joshua.

God is not limited to a leader, a place, “the good old days”, a nation, or anything else that is here today and gone tomorrow.

His promises continue.

His faithfulness outlasts all else.

And no matter what season you might be in.

God can and will continue to lead His people who are in His eternal Kingdom.

The Kingdom we are a part of will never be shaken.

It will never be taken away.

It will never be destroyed or overcome.

It will never end.

With Christ as the Head of the church, the church will continue on. It isn't bound to location, congregation, or any one faithful shepherding leader.

God will continue to rise up those who will carry on His mission in the world, and call those who will be His witnesses...

in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Jesus Christ Left.

Just as God carried the Gospel to the world in the hands of those who were impacted by and walked closely with Jesus Christ, so He will also continue His mission today.

It's a powerful thing to recognize that Jesus left this world having laid the ground work **but not having carried the message Himself.**

But the Gospel made it's way, because God is working in the world.

It may be hard for us to trust the continued motion of the body, but we must allow God to lead.

Change

That often means we must allow things to evolve and change with the times as circumstances happen and cultural shifts take place.

Not falling away from the center and heart of the Gospel, but in the everyday shape that the Gospel takes.

- o Whether heavily opposed or widely accepted
- o Whether in small or large buildings
- o In seasons of drought and in seasons of revival.
- o In the good times and in the bad.

Colossians 1:17-18

17 *And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. 18 And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.*

Christ is the Head. He will lead His church.

II. God's Unchanging Promise

Joshua 1:5

5 *No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.*

God doesn't promise Joshua an easier road. He promises His presence.

The same God who walked with Moses will walk with Joshua. The leadership has changed, but the covenant has not. The calling continues because God's faithfulness does.

God's presence is the constant when everything else changes.

We often want reassurance about outcomes, timelines, and success. God offers something better—Himself.

When life feels unpredictable, ask:

- **Where is God promising His presence rather than clarity?**
- **What would it look like to trust His nearness instead of demanding certainty?**

God's presence matters more than knowing how the story will unfold.

A. Trusting That God's Presence Goes With You.

1 Corinthians 2:12;16

12 Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.

16 "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

Sometimes we spend so much time feeling incapable, after having been given the greatest and most impactful power in the whole world.

Maybe our reason for feeling this way is because we aren't aligned with what the Spirit of the Lord is here to accomplish in us and in this world.

You might not see flashes of lightning or thunder, physical mountains crumble or weather patterns change, but the kingdom of God is at work in the lives of people.

And the Spirit of God is leading us to accomplish that work.

We often struggle to properly identify what work the Lord is doing inside of ourselves.

The help that has been given to us is wonderfully powerful. God's Spirit works in unique ways from our perspective, because of the things He came to accomplish.

John 16:8-11

8 And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; 10 concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you will see me no longer; 11 concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

He will convict the world.

The Spirit of the Lord works on us by convicting us, but also through us to convict the world.

A group of people who are a witness to what the Spirit is doing in the world.

Paul, in his second letter to the Corinthians made a point about this kind of thing and their new positioning as the body of Christ.

2 Corinthians 3:3-5

3 And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

4 Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. 5 Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God,

If we find ourselves feeling incapable, we might be, but the Spirit in us is not, and our problem might be the lack of trust we have in His work in us.

B. Trusting That God's Presence Goes With Others.

Jason & The Guy's That Will Preach

There's a reason why I'm up here preaching this morning and Jason isn't here, that I'd like to tell you about.

Jason has been working closely with a group of young men and women who want to be discipled in a deeper way.

There has been different times and ways they've met to discuss various things, but most recently, they've been meeting early before a bible study each week and getting mentored by him.

A church here in Louisiana contacted Jason with a need to fill their preaching role for now, and agreed to the idea of having the boys come up and rotate taking an opportunity to preach to their congregation on Sunday mornings.

Today, Jason is preaching out there, and the boys went with him, as a way of introducing them and kicking off their time speaking to that church.

These are young men you will see here in the church that most of you know, and I wanted to bring it up today because it fit so well with the topic I was given for this morning.

That God is faithful and continues to work in the next generation.

That doesn't mean we should leave them to it, watch from a-far and hope they do well...

They need:

- o Mentorship
- o Guidance
- o Practice
- o Discipleship
- o Encouragement
- o Support.

But when we've done all that, we remember that the Spirit of the Lord is In them too, to work His will in the world.

John 10:16

16 And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

God's hand isn't short, and He works in the lives of other people as well.

We often struggle to trust others. It's easier for us not to.

But we haven't joined an individualistic kingdom, we've joined a body.

Unity isn't a choice, it's an identifying component of the Church.

And I believe one of the special components of life that functions like glue is trust.

Trust binds us together.

It might feel scary, but it's essential and it's patterned after our heavenly Father who entrusts us with many things to be faithful with.

The Youth

We shouldn't downplay or downgrade those christians coming behind us.

God's plan to use them might not be quite as clear but it does not mean it's not as important or impactful.

If anything, they may be right in the middle of how He has assigned them to be used right now. This assignment may have a lot to do with preparation rather than productivity.

We struggle when it comes to preparation.

We often want answers, results, responses, and fruit immediately. But we aren't a part of a momentary kind of family. We aren't a part of the kind of thing that is here today and gone tomorrow.

This serves as a reminder that we have to pull back and recognize our own place in a bigger picture, one that we aren't in charge of.

Christ is the Head of the body. He is writing the script.

Our focus needs to continue in the areas of our assignment by Him, and we must continue to enable younger believers to follow their assignment without hindrance.

Learning rather, to walk with them, teaching and guiding as they learn about reflecting the character and image of Jesus Christ in their own lives.

Maybe making mistakes, but learning and growing.

III. Courage Is a Choice

Joshua 1:6-7

6 Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them.

7 Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go.

Three times in nine verses, God tells Joshua: “Be strong and courageous.” That repetition matters. **Courage is not a personality trait—it’s a decision.**

Joshua is not told to feel brave. He’s told to *act faithfully*.

Courage flows from:

- Trusting God’s promises
- Anchoring life in God’s Word
- Believing God will be faithful again

Courage is obedience fueled by trust, not the absence of fear.

Courage today may look like:

- Taking responsibility when it feels heavy
- Saying yes when confidence feels thin or it makes you nervous
- Continuing forward even when emotions lag behind obedience

Be careful with this one... If you see someone in a courageous act, it’s not because they don’t feel nerves, or because they have less fear than you do.

It’s not because they don’t have their doubts, or struggle to say yes.

It’s because they made a decision that forward is the only way forward. They made a decision to go no matter what.

It’s almost inevitable that it will be hard, God wants our trust in Him to be the final say so.

God does not wait for us to feel courageous—He calls us to choose it.

A. If You Need To Know, You Probably Won’t Go.

We won’t know everything about everything.

We won’t see exactly how things are going to work out.

We're not going to have all of the answers.

But if we did, **What would faith even be?**

We're not always given answers about what will happen. We're often given **instructions about how our faithfulness can take stride.**

And that's what we see here in the first chapter of Joshua.

Joshua 1:8-9

8 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. 9 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."

B. Why Does 'Cowardly' Make The List?

Revelation 21:8

8 But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

Maybe it's because God has given us what we need to be strong and courageous.

How can God use us if we continue a never ending cycle of doubting and lacking faith?

The presence of the Lord within us gives us every reason to move forward into what might feel uncomfortable, but we know is right.

Some of the times Jesus seemed most frustrated with the state of the world or the close group around Him was when a lack of faith was on full display.

We don't know outcomes, but that gives us more reason to prove our faith and trust in Him.

Conclusion - Moving Forward Together

Joshua does not cross the Jordan alone. God's people step into the unknown together. Faith was never meant to be a solo journey.

God strengthens His people through shared obedience—through encouragement, accountability, and collective trust.

Faith advances through obedience practiced in community.

How The Story Ended.

If you know the story of the times for Israel during Joshua's leadership then you know that it's one of those times where things turned out really well.

Usually hearing of all the times where Israel was turning away from God, this was a season of good things, blessings, and moving forward.

They handled the transition, and they walked into the promised land.

All of God's promises came about that He had promised to them, and the time while Joshua lead was truly blessed.

Joshua 21:45

45 Not one word of all the good promises that the Lord had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass.

The people had to be obedient and follow the commands of the Lord.

Altogether the Israelite people followed and obeyed, and it accounted for a time in Israelite history of huge blessing, rest and seeing God's promises fulfilled.

Joshua 24:31

31 Israel served the Lord all the days of Joshua...

Ask yourself:

- Who is walking this season with me?
- Who am I walking alongside?
- Where do I need community to help me move forward faithfully?

God often uses “us” to help each other step into what's next.

What's next may be difficult—but God never sends us alone.

And the difficult seasons often provide the greatest opportunity to prove and refine the love that is within us.