

The Leadership Dare
June 3, 2012
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Joshua 1:1-18

Opening discussion question: Name one person you consider successful and tell us why?

In June we'll be focused on how to have COURAGEOUS FAITH in the Lord in challenging circumstances. One of the Bible's best examples of COURAGEOUS FAITH is Joshua.

The book of Joshua tells us about the time immediately after the death of Moses. After 40 years of wandering in the desert (due to their sin); the new generation of Israelites were ready to cross over the Jordan into the PROMISED LAND. They needed a strong leader. That leader was Joshua.

Joshua was not only a "brilliant" military mind, but a Godly "Spiritual" leader as well. His SECRET TO SUCCESS? Submission to and obedience of God's direction. "When God spoke, Joshua listened and obeyed." (Life Application Study Bible)

The Life Application Study Bible summarizes it this way:

"Joshua was committed to obeying God, and this book is about obedience. Whether conquering enemies or settling the land, God's people were required to do it God's way. In his final message to the people, Joshua underscored the importance of obeying God. Joshua 23:11 - 'So be very careful to love the Lord your God', and in 24:15, 'choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve...But as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.'"

Whether you are a leader of a business; a leader in church; or, most importantly, a leader of your family, we all need a GOOD DOSE OF COURAGE. This book of Joshua can inspire us to "be strong and courageous" because that STRENGTH comes from God!

Joshua 1:1-11

1 After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide: 2 "Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them —to the Israelites. 3 I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. 4 Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates —all the Hittite country—to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. 5 No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be

with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. 6 Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them. 7 “Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. 8 Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”

10 So Joshua ordered the officers of the people: 11 “Go through the camp and tell the people, ‘Get your provisions ready. Three days from now you will cross the Jordan here to go in and take possession of the land the Lord your God is giving you for your own.’”

- In verse two the Lord himself sets the stage for this book: “Moses my servant is dead.” He follows immediately with: “Now then, you and all these people, get ready...”
- Have you noticed that at the end of any “era” in our lives, after we grieve, God always says “Now then, get ready”?
- Verse 3: God confirms that He will keep the promise He made to Moses. Every place that Joshua sets foot will be given to the Children of Israel.
- But, it won’t be without a fight! A hard fight.
- Verse 5 - Question: What two important promises did God make to Joshua?
- God promises success: “No one will be able to stand against you.”
- Also in verse 5: As He was with Moses, He promises Joshua: “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”
- Verse 6 - God had promised to do His part. What was Joshua’s part?
- Be strong and courageous!
- This wasn’t the first time Joshua had heard these words.
- Turn back one book in your Bible to the end of Deuteronomy, Chapter 31.
- Moses is addressing Joshua, his successor, and all of Israel.
- He tells them they will be victorious over their enemies. In verse 6:

Deuteronomy 31:6

Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.” 7. Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the presence of all Israel, “Be strong and courageous, for you must go with this people into the land that the LORD swore to their ancestors to give them, and you must divide it among them as their inheritance.

Deuteronomy 31:23

The LORD gave this command to Joshua son of Nun: “Be strong and courageous, for you will bring the Israelites into the land I promised them on oath, and I myself will be with you.”

- “Be strong and courageous.” A phrase that appears 11 times in the Old Testament.
- Moses says it to Joshua. God says it to Joshua. And, later, David says these words to his son Solomon just before the throne is passed to him.
- Verse 7: God repeats the order with a difference. What is it?

- Be strong and VERY courageous!
- And in verses 7 what FURTHER ORDER does God give?
- Obey the Word of God (at that time, the book of law Moses had delivered from God.
- Verse 8: What SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIONS did God give about His Word?
- 8 Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it.
- Question: Verse 8. What exactly does it mean to meditate?
- You may feel that meditation is something only monks and mystics can do. So let me ask, do you know how to worry? If you can worry, you can meditate. To meditate merely means to think about something over and over. Let it simmer in your mind. Reflect on it from different angles until it becomes part of you. — The Me I Want to Be (John Ortberg)
- End of verse 8: What does God promise if Joshua will obey?
- “Then you will be prosperous and successful.”
- You may read those words “be strong and courageous” and ask: “How do I do that?”

Charles Stanley gives us some perspective:

“Joshua faced a similar situation as he prepared to lead Israel into the promised land. Chosen by God to complete the task, Joshua struggled with thoughts of fear and failure. The angel of the Lord gave him three principles to keep him focused on the victory of God’s strength: (1) meditate on the Word of God daily; (2) focus, be watchful and not distracted by the turmoil around him; and (3) do exactly what God told him to do. When you begin to realize who Jesus Christ is and how much He cares for you, your faith level will increase. The greater your faith level, the clearer His strength will become.” Stanley, C. F. (1999). On holy ground (7). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Are you and I focused on God’s Word and His promises, or our circumstances?
Are we watchful, or distracted by the turmoil around us?

- To make TRIPLE SURE Joshua got it, what does verse 9 say?
- 9 “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”
- What about today? That promise in verse 5 “I will never leave you nor forsake you” applies to YOU and ME, today. That’s a promise that applies in every circumstance.
- Your friends may abandon you; your family might even give up on you; but when Jesus moves in HE NEVER MOVES OUT!
- Now what about God’s charge to “be strong and courageous”? This also wasn’t just to Joshua, but to YOU AND ME. But...
- Here’s a question: Does being “strong and courageous” guarantee success in any circumstance? When would you say it applies in the life of a Christian?
- When we’re in God’s WILL and living by God’s WORD, He will EQUIP US to be STRONG and COURAGEOUS.

The Life Application Study Bible says:

“Just as God was with Joshua, he is with us as we face our new challenges. We may not conquer nations, but every day we face tough situations, difficult people, and temptations. However, God promises that he will never abandon us or fail to help us. By asking God to direct us we can conquer many of life’s challenges.”

I don’t know about you. But over the years there were times when I have CLUNG to “Be strong and courageous” like a LIFE RAFT! I have leaned HARD on “I will never leave you nor forsake you!”

What about you and me?

Chuck Swindoll writes:

“I’m not suggesting that all of us must be Nehemiahs or Joshuas. Sometimes that may be necessary. But, I have observed over the years that some of the greatest demonstrations of courage occur in private places. At home when dealing with a child’s willful defiance or a teenager’s rebellion, or facing one’s own selfishness, or in a board meeting when you’re in the minority. Sometimes just staying with something over the long haul—maintaining the vision year after year—is magnificent proof of a courageous heart.”

- Is God calling you to a scary challenge? Is it a position of leadership maybe here at church or even in this class? Or a new mission or ministry. Or is it just something out of your ‘comfort zone’? How will you respond?
- For the next few verses Joshua spoke to the tribes of Israel giving them SPECIFIC marching orders. Here is how THEY responded:

Joshua 1:16-18

16 Then they answered Joshua, “Whatever you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. 17 Just as we fully obeyed Moses, so we will obey you. Only may the Lord your God be with you as he was with Moses. 18 Whoever rebels against your word and does not obey it, whatever you may command them, will be put to death. Only be strong and courageous!”

- Don’t you love those last words in verse 18? The people fed back to Joshua what God had said. They too were encouraging their leader!
- Let me say as a leader, when the people you are leading start encouraging you that’s just like saying “Sic ‘em to a bulldog!” That will make you get up and go when you thought your “get up and go” had “got up and left!”
- The people responded to God’s plan the same way Joshua responded: in OBEDIENCE.

What could God accomplish with ANY OF US if we’d just DECIDE IN ADVANCE to respond: “Whatever you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go”?

So, What's the Takeaway?

- Question: What do you want to RECALL from this week's lesson?
- God instructed Joshua to BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS
- He also gave Him specific ACTION STEPS to be successful:
 1. Claim the promise that God will NEVER LEAVE YOU NOR FORSAKE YOU
 2. Meditate on the Word of God daily.
 3. Focus on God's work and not be distracted by the turmoil around him.
 4. Obey: Do exactly what God told him to do.

Succeeding in God's eyes is not the same as succeeding by the world's standards. There's nothing wrong with the blessings of prosperity and material success if earned honestly. But, God's definition of success is something very different.

Warren Wiersbe writes:

"The questions God's people are to ask are: Did we obey the will of God? Were we empowered by the Spirit of God? Did we serve to the glory of God? If we can answer yes to those questions, then our ministry has been successful in God's eyes, no matter what people may think."

My challenge to you as we close: What is God calling you to do that will require being STRONG and COURAGEOUS? It may be in leading your family; at church; on the job; or all three. Will you pray this week and ask Him to reveal it to you?