

# Joshua 1, 1-18

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Lesson: Courage

## Joshua 1:1-5 (KJV)

1 Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD it came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying,

2 Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel.

3 Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.

4 From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast.

5 There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

## Joshua

We can deduce that Joshua was 80-85 years old when Moses died.

How?

**Moses died at 120 years old** (Deuteronomy 34:7 KJV): "And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated." What a blessing God granted Moses. We all would love to receive such a blessing, and for those we love to as well.

**Joshua died at 110 years** old (Joshua 24:29 KJV): "And it came to pass after these things, that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an hundred and ten years old."

The Israelites wandered in the wilderness for **40 years** after the Exodus from Egypt until they entered the Promised Land under Joshua (after Moses' death; see Numbers 14:33-34, Deuteronomy 2:7, Joshua 5:6).

**Joshua** and Caleb were the two faithful spies sent to scout Canaan (Numbers 13). Caleb was **40 years old** at the time of the spying, which occurred early in the wilderness period (Joshua 14:7). Joshua is generally understood to have been of similar age.

Putting that into perspective with our lifespans, 80 is 72% of 110, and if we assume that our lifespan is between 80 and 90, that would be like being between 58 and 65 today.

So, Joshua had lived a long life and was a seasoned and experienced man when he assumed leadership.

## Lesson

This lesson is entitled "Strong and Courageous" and when we read that, we think of ourselves, we feel supported that God wants us to have courage, that **He's** got **our** back. That's obviously true, but the question we are going to focus on today, is...

Q: "Why? Why does God want us to be courageous?"

Keep that question in mind as we go through the lesson, and let's see if we can figure it out together.

"Moses **my** servant is dead..."

This is the first recorded time that God spoke to Joshua.

Q: What do you notice about God's first words to him?

God's focus is God. Moses was not significant because he led the Israelites, or because of any of his many achievements. He was important because he was God's servant. We cannot help but see events from our own perspective. Someone made **me** angry. Something bad happened to **me**. They hurt **my** feelings.

But it is not our perspective that matters, not the Israelites', not even the American's – it is God's perspective that matters, and so there is no sugary eulogy for Moses, just the

straightforward announcement of his passing, in the context that matters to God. *What made Moses special is that he was God's servant.*

C.S. Lewis wrote in *Mere Christianity* that pride is the great sin or the root of all others because:

- It is self-exaltation that directly opposes God's rightful place.
- It leads to every other vice (unbelief, rebellion, envy, etc.).
- Humility is the opposite — and God gives grace to the humble.

Perhaps like C.S. Lewis states, God hates our pride because it is the self-exaltation that makes **us** the center rather than **God**. Out of all the things we do, it's possible that pride is the worst, because it prevents us from seeing the world the way God does.

We are only important because God loves us. Moses was only important because he was God's servant. *Believing anything else is like standing in the light of God and looking only at our own shadow.*

Imagine the courage of a person who truly believed this...

There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

What would such a person be capable of?

Anything.

What would stop such a person from doing what is righteous?

Nothing.

## Joshua 1:6-11 (KJV)

6 **Be strong and of a good courage:** for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swear unto their fathers to give them.

7 Only **be thou strong and very courageous,** that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee:

turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.

8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

9 Have not I commanded thee? **Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.**

10 Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying,

11 Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which the LORD your God giveth you to possess it.

God tells Joshua to be strong and to have courage three times. What do you think God wants from Joshua? <Chuckle and wait for people to respond. They will add some insights.>

He wants Joshua to boldly do exactly what He has directed. He should go without any uncertainty, no inward doubt that causes him to look to the left or right of the path that God has directed. God directs Joshua to meditate on the book of the law day and night, studying it and making it part of every day so that his focus on what God wants is reinforced daily.

Imagine a father that wants his son or daughter to drive to Albuquerque. The father sits down with them and tells them how important it is that they arrive in Albuquerque and goes over the directions with them – telling them that they should not take any other route other than the one he has highlighted for them. Before they set out, the father tells them that they should keep the map in the passenger seat, and every time they stop for a break, they should look at it closely to make certain they are on the path.

God gave Joshua instructions, but He didn't plan to talk to Joshua every day to remind him of his path, *He charged Joshua with the responsibility to keep on course.*

God, in the form of the Holy Spirit, softens our heart and opens the communications with us to show us His path for our lives, and while our heart is soft and we're the most open to Him He gives us an excitement for His word.

Then the world's toils and interests come at us. We have challenges that distract us. We have pleasures and joy that distract us, and that excitement and energy to read His word and stay in it wanes. We drift off course whenever we are not looking at the map every day and meditating on it.

We sometimes even wistfully blame God for not keeping the enthusiasm and energy that we had when we were closest to Him. But that was the part that God gave us responsibility for. God told Joshua...

"...thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success."

It was Joshua's responsibility to stay on course and connected to His guidance – not God's. It is our responsibility to stay connected to God in the same way and when we go off course, it is because we stopped looking at the map.

## Prosper

God says that if Joshua meditates on His word, and does everything that is written there – that He will make Joshua rich... <pause>

Is that right? No.

The key Hebrew word for "prosperous" (or "make thy way prosperous") is tsalach (צַלַח). **It means to advance, push forward, break through, succeed, or thrive in one's endeavors.** It emphasizes progress and effective accomplishment aligned with God's purposes, not necessarily financial riches.

The word for "good success" (or "have good success") is from sakal (שָׂכַל). This often carries the sense of acting wisely, having insight, prudence, or dealing wisely. Some translations render it as "then you shall act wisely" or "deal wisely."

When God tells Joshua that he will prosper, He means that Joshua will push forward, break through barriers and succeed in accomplishing HIS objectives.

Q: Remember when we started that I asked the question

"Why? Why does God want us to be courageous?"

We see the answer in these verses. How many times have we heard someone say that God was on their side? God helped us beat that other football team. God helped me win that race, get that job, recover from cancer. Was God able to control all those things?

Obviously, He could if He chose to. Did He do it for **us**, so that **our** plans would be enabled? No. He didn't. Whatever God does, He does so that **His** will is fulfilled. If we happened to be in complete alignment with His plan, it would seem as if everything we wanted is coming to us. We would look as if all the choices we made were perfect, but our "wisdom" would really just be our alignment with God's plan.

In the movie, Back to The Future, Biff steals a book of sports history from the future and gives it to himself in the past. His past self uses the sports book to make bets on games and he gets rich. Biff is able to make bets without any risk of losing. There's nothing to cause him to be afraid. He knows the future.

Just like Joshua, and just like us.

God gave Joshua instructions, and He gave him His word to guide him. God gives us instructions for a righteous path, a righteous life, and he gives us a guidebook that is even more complete than the one that Joshua had, to guide us and keep us on track.

It is our responsibility to stay on God's path for us. He makes it clear to Joshua, and through the recording of this history in the Bible, He makes it clear to us.

### Joshua 1:16-18 (KJV)

16 And they answered Joshua, saying, All that thou commandest us we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us, we will go.

17 According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee: only the LORD thy God be with thee, as he was with Moses.

18 Whosoever he be that doth rebel against thy commandment, and will not hearken unto thy words in all that thou commandest him, he shall be put to death: only be strong and of a good courage.

I believe that the Bible has a lot of stories that show God's sense of humor. He made us in His image, in His spiritual image, and look how often we laugh.

Studies indicate that the average child laughs 300 times a day. <pause>

The average adult laughs 15-20 times a day. It's a lot less, but still, consider yourself and maybe that is more than you would have thought if I'd asked without giving you a reference point.

Those studies that counted the number of times people laughed said that laughter is linked to better mood, immune function and social connection.

I believe God has a great sense of humor. There's a word for knowing all things – "omniscience", and a word for having all power – "omnipotence", but I don't know what the word is for having an all-powerful sense of humor. Whatever that word is, I believe that God has it. I believe that like the best comedians, He has the insight to see the irony in every situation. I believe the Bible is full of such examples where God sees the irony or humor and He's left that for us because that insight is something He shares with us – it's part of His image in us.

If you read...

16 And they answered Joshua, saying, All that thou commandest us we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us, we will go.

17 According as we hearkened unto Moses in all things, so will we hearken unto thee: only the LORD thy God be with thee, as he was with Moses.

... And don't think that when the Israelites were reassuring Joshua of how well they would follow him, that he didn't feel a moment's irony at that – then you've forgotten how poorly they followed Moses. I can imagine Joshua hearing that and doing a double take, thinking to himself, "Wait a minute...".

It looks like they started to fall off course even before they finished speaking. At the very moment they are trying to convince Joshua, trying to convince God really, that they will stay on course. Watch what they say.

18 Whosoever he be that doth rebel against thy commandment, and will not hearken unto thy words in all that thou commandest him, he shall be put to death: only be strong and of a good courage.

They immediately take a message that God directs into each of **their** hearts, setting **their** responsibility to keep on His path and they deflect it to everyone else. The right response would be to say, "We will hold ourselves accountable to God".

If everyone holds themselves accountable to following God's will, what need is there of others to step in and judge them?

What need do we have of a king if each person is following God's will?

What need do we have of a government if each person is following God's will?

What need do we have of man's laws if each person is following God's will?

These are idyllic things to say. We know everyone is not good. There are evil men everywhere around us and whole countries of people who are eager to take advantage of us, enslave us to work for them and even kill us. The world is imperfect and we know that **few** will even **try** to walk through the narrow gate.

But this is God's will for those who would follow Him. Soften your heart and meditate on His guidance day and night. Make his objectives your objectives.

He wants us to be courageous and bold so that we will achieve His objectives, not ours.