

Studies in the book of Joshua
Lesson 1 - Joshua 1:1-18
The Abundant Life
Marching Orders

“God buries His workman, but His work goes on.” Israel has finished mourning for Moses, and now God speaks to Joshua concerning his responsibilities as the new leader of the nation. God had chosen Joshua to be Moses successor as far back as the battle with Amalek. It must have encouraged Joshua greatly to know that he was called of God, for he had a tremendous task ahead of him.

Notice that God gives every encouragement to Joshua: (1) the promise of the land, vs. 2-4, (2) the promise of His presence, vs. 5, and (3) the assurance that God would keep His word, vs. 6-9. He had already given them the land; all they had to do was step out by faith and claim it! All we need do is step out by faith and possess our possessions.

As God was with Moses, so He would be with Joshua: “*I will not leave you nor forsake you*” (vs. 5). Leaders change, and times change, but God does not change. Notice that courage is demanded in the Christian life, but this courage is supplied by the Word of God. Moses had been writing “the Book of the Law,” and this Book was now given to Joshua. He was to read the Book, meditate upon it night and day, and obey its commands. If Joshua was able to conquer Canaan having only the first five books of the Bible, how much more should we be encouraged to overcome now that we have a complete Bible!

Here we have a “spiritual chain of command.” God commanded Joshua (vs. 9), Joshua commanded the leaders (vs. 10), and the leaders were to command the people (vs. 11). This is spiritual leadership under the command of God, and this same pattern we should follow in the church today. Joshua told the leaders what God had told him, and they quickly passed the message along to their people. Three days later, they would cross the Jordan and enter the Promised Land, and they had to prepare for the event.

Note their prayer in vs. 17 and their encouragement in vs. 18. Joshua had seen their division and heard their murmuring years ago. How grateful he must have been for the unity of the Spirit now seen among the people.

8. What did the leaders of Israel say to encourage Joshua in his new role?

9. How do you think Joshua felt when God commanded him to lead the nation of Israel into the Promised Land?

10. How does Joshua's response to God and, in turn, the Israelites response to Joshua motivate you to respond to overwhelming responsibilities in your own life?

11. What does this passage teach you about how to deal with negative emotions, such as fear, self-doubt, and discouragement?

12. Why do you think God reminded Joshua of the relationship the Lord had with Moses?

Stand Strong and Hang On

Was Joshua hard of hearing? The Lord reminded him three times to be “strong and courageous.” There must have been an important message in those words.

The Hebrew word for “strong” refers to “strong legs” while the one for “courage” refers to “having a secure grasp.” The point is clear. God was telling Joshua that his success as a leader depended on whether he could stand strong and hold on tightly!

Joshua had already experienced situations in which he was forced to take a strong stance in the face of opposition. For instance, when the Israelites were poised to enter Canaan 40 years earlier, Joshua had been one of only two men who insisted that the nation should move forward under God’s power.

What was Joshua to keep a “secure grasp” on? God’s plans, purposes, and values as found in “the Book of the Law.”

Joshua’s example urges believers to consider: What do we stand for and what do we stand on? What are we holding on to with a secure grip?