

COMMISSIONED

God's commission includes the promise of His presence and the expectation of obedience.

JOSHUA 1:1-9

MEMORY VERSE: JOSHUA 1:5

PREPARE TO LEAD THE GROUP TIME

- **READ** Joshua 1:1-18 and Understand the Context (pp. 14-15). Review the Introduction (pp. 10-11) for additional insight into Joshua.
- **STUDY** Joshua 1:1-9, using Explore the Text on pages 15-19. Consult the *Explore the Bible Adult Commentary* (available in print and digital format from LifeWay.com) for additional insight. Understand what the term “commissioned” means in the context of serving the Lord.
- **PLAN** the group time using ideas under Lead Group Bible Study (pp. 20-21). Tailor the plans for your group using More Ideas (p. 22) and the ideas included online at Blog.LifeWay.com/ExploretheBible.
- **GROW** from expert insights on weekly studies through the Ministry Grid (MinistryGrid.com/Web/ExploretheBible).
- **GATHER** the following items: ☐ Personal Study Guides; and ☐ Copies of **PACK ITEM 5** (*Bookmark: Memory Verses*) to distribute to the group. Prepare to display these Pack Items: ☐ **PACK ITEM 2** (*Outlines of Joshua; Judges; Ruth*); and ☐ **PACK ITEM 4** (*Time Line: Joshua; Judges; Ruth*).



FIRST THOUGHTS

KEY DOCTRINE

Scripture

The Scriptures are the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried.

Life is full of transitions and surprises that often force you to take on additional responsibilities. A job promotion usually carries more responsibility. A co-worker may need to take a leave of absence, and part of his work gets added to your job. The health of your parents may require you to handle their financial matters. You might find it stressful if you were called on to coach one of your children's basketball, soccer, or baseball teams.

(In PSG, p. 12) **Reflect on a time in your life when you had to assume a greater level of responsibility. What were your initial thoughts when you were first informed about this new responsibility?**

BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR

For additional context, read "The Hittites: A Historical Perspective" in the Winter 2016-17 issue of *Biblical Illustrator*. Available at LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator.

The Bible again and again affirms that what God calls us to do, He equips us to do. His Spirit within us enables us to live the life God expects. As we lay hold of God's calling, we will find our fulfillment in doing His will. We also will become more like Jesus as we follow Him step-by-step.

This week's session focuses on Joshua, who became Israel's leader after Moses' death on Mount Nebo (Deut. 34:5-8). Moses had served God and Israel well, but now he was gone and Joshua had assumed leadership. The passage describes how God commissioned His new leader for a new task. God promised to be with Joshua, but He also expected Joshua's complete obedience.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

JOSHUA 1:1-18

Joshua's first appearance in the Bible occurs in Exodus 17. There, Joshua led Israel's army against the Amalekites, a foe the Israelites would face again in later generations (Ex. 17:8-16). Other texts also show Joshua at Moses' side. He waited for Moses at the foot of Mount Sinai while Moses received God's laws (Ex. 24:13) and was present when Moses came down (Ex. 32:17). He kept watch by the tent in which Moses spoke with God face-to-face (Ex. 33:11). Under Moses' direction, he was one of the 12 spies who spied out the land of promise. He and Caleb brought back a good report, encouraging the people to believe God's promise and take the land (Num. 13:8,16; 14:7-9). In Numbers 27, Moses commissioned Joshua as Israel's next leader (27:18-23). Later, as Moses was about to die, he commissioned Joshua again (Deut. 31:23). After Moses' death, God's Spirit came upon Joshua as he assumed the leadership of Israel (Deut. 34:9).

Joshua 1 records God's commissioning of Joshua following Moses' death. God spoke to Joshua and encouraged him to set his sights on the task

that lay ahead (Josh. 1:2-5). Such a commissioning would require Joshua to be strong and courageous as he stepped into the new challenge God had given him. God also instructed Joshua to follow His Word carefully and to meditate on that Word every step of the way as he led the Israelites into the promised land (Josh. 1:7-8). God used Moses to communicate His inspired Word to Israel. He now wanted Joshua to live by that Word so God's people would see that His words still had application for the next generation. God promised to be with Joshua wherever Joshua would go (Josh. 1:9).

The final aspect of Joshua's commissioning included his securing the support of God's people (Josh. 1:10-18). Joshua approached the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh and asked for their support (Josh. 1:12-15). Earlier, in the days of Moses, these tribes had requested to settle east of the Jordan River (Num. 32:1-5). Moses required them to help the other tribes conquer the land of Canaan on the west side of the Jordan, and the tribes agreed they would (Num. 32:16-19). The tribes remembered their commitment to Moses and assured Joshua they would obey his voice in every way (Josh. 1:16-18). Joshua 1 thus records God's commissioning of Joshua and the people's ratification of that commission.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

A NEW LEADER (JOSH. 1:1-5)

God's people faced two significant transitions as the Book of Joshua begins. First, they faced a transition in leadership. Moses had died and Joshua was their new leader. Second, Israel was transitioning from life in the wilderness to life in the promised land. As the people prepared to cross the Jordan and enter Canaan, God met with His new leader.

VERSE 1

The end of Deuteronomy records Moses' death, and the beginning of the Book of Joshua records the transition to Joshua's leadership. The text thus links us to what happened immediately preceding Joshua's commission and reminds us God's purposes were moving forward. Israel's heavenly Leader remained to guide His new leader and His people into the promised land. Moses is described as **the LORD's servant**, a title that highlights Moses' willingness to surrender his life to whatever God wanted.

It is hard to imagine the emotion Joshua must have felt. He had served Moses well, but now he stood as Israel's new leader. What would that mean for him and for God's people? **The LORD spoke** to him and reassured him.

The word translated **served** elsewhere describes service one performs on behalf of another. It is a different word than the word *servant* used for Moses; Joshua would only receive that title at the end of his life (Josh. 24:29). Joshua had served Israel's former leader and now stood as Israel's new leader.

BIBLE SKILL

Use other Scripture to help understand a Bible passage.

Read the following passages in your Bible: Exodus 17:8-16; 24:12-13; 32:17; 33:7-11; Numbers 27:18-23; Deuteronomy 31:23; 34:5-9. What lessons do you think Joshua learned under Moses' leadership that prepared him to be Israel's new leader?

JOSHUA 1:1

¹ After the death of Moses the LORD's servant, the LORD spoke to Joshua son of Nun, who had served Moses:

JOSHUA 1:2

² “Moses My servant is dead. Now you and all the people prepare to cross over the Jordan to the land I am giving the Israelites.

JOSHUA 1:3

³ I have given you every place where the sole of your foot treads, just as I promised Moses.

JOSHUA 1:4

⁴ Your territory will be from the wilderness and Lebanon to the great Euphrates River—all the land of the Hittites—and west to the Mediterranean Sea.

VERSE 2

God’s opening words, ***Moses My servant is dead***, may seem unnecessary. After all, no one probably felt the reality of Moses’ death more than Joshua. He now bore the responsibility Moses had borne. But God’s words comprised a call to action, for the time of mourning had ended. Perhaps Joshua needed his Lord to remind him that even though Moses was gone, the God who had guided Moses remained, and His purposes for His people continued.

God announced His plan to Joshua—***you and all the people prepare to cross over the Jordan***. In the original Hebrew, the command is in the singular, emphasizing Joshua’s leadership role. All the people would enter the promised land, but Joshua would lead them. The Jordan River was overflowing its banks due to the runoff from the winter rains and snow to the north (Josh. 3:15), but God soon would part the waters (Josh. 3:14-17). ***The land I am giving the Israelites*** was the land God had promised to Abraham centuries earlier (Gen. 12:6-7). God had foretold Israel’s slavery in Egypt to Abraham (Gen. 15:13-14), but now His people’s day of promise had come.

VERSE 3

In God’s statement ***I have given you every place where the sole of your foot treads***, the words *you* and *your* are now in the plural, designating all God’s people. God spoke in the past tense regarding this action because in His mind and purpose, the task was as good as done. Biblical writers elsewhere also sometimes use the past tense to describe future events that are so certain in God’s purpose that we may speak of them as already accomplished. Paul said that God has raised us up with Christ and seated us in the heavenly places (Eph. 2:6). We are not yet in heaven, but God’s salvation is so certain that Paul speaks of it as a past event. He also speaks of believers’ glorification, the receiving of their resurrection bodies, in the same way (Rom. 8:29).

The words ***just as I promised Moses*** stress the fact that we can count on God’s Word, and thus all He says is in effect a promise (2 Cor. 1:20). God’s purposes through Moses now continued through Joshua. God would make good on promises He made to an earlier leader in and through His next leader.

VERSE 4

Joshua’s encounter with God took place in the Jordan Valley. Joshua could look across the valley and see the beginnings of the territory God had promised to Israel. God began to describe it for him as Joshua looked west.

The ***wilderness*** probably designates the region in the southern area of the promised land. As Joshua looked directly across the river to the west, he would have seen the beginnings of this wilderness area. Joshua also would have looked southward toward the Dead Sea, where the wilderness transitions into a more desert-like region.

The name ***Lebanon*** refers to a mountainous region toward the north of what would become Israel’s territory. God’s promise to Israel included

territory as far as **the great Euphrates River**. In ancient times, King David was able to control the region all the way to the Euphrates.

The **Hittites** had a great empire during Abraham's day in what is now modern Turkey and upper Syria. Abraham interacted with them in the Book of Genesis (Gen. 23:10). In the days of Joshua, the Hittites remained a formidable threat from the northernmost frontier. However, the Bible does not record interaction between the Hittites and Israelites either during Joshua's time or later.

Israel's western border would be **the Mediterranean Sea**. Ironically, the nation never became a seafaring people to any significant extent. Only in the days of Solomon did Israel use this means of travel and trade (1 Kings 9:26-28). The Phoenicians, who came to control territory that should have belonged to Israel, were seagoing people.

VERSE 5

God provided Joshua assurance against Israel's enemies. The words **no one will be able to stand against you** describe the enemies' inability to withstand this great movement of God. Forty years earlier, Joshua, along with eleven other spies, had spied out Canaan (Num. 13:1-20). They had seen incredible obstacles, but God's promises could override human circumstances. Even today, believers often face challenges that seem way beyond their ability to handle. Such challenges remind us to trust in God's sustaining grace. He is able to accomplish above and beyond all we ask or think (Eph. 3:20).

The words **as long as you live** stress the lasting power of God's presence. The Lord would accomplish His purpose through Joshua for all of Joshua's days. The words **I will be with you, just as I was with Moses** again stress God's determination to demonstrate through Joshua the same wonders He had demonstrated through Moses. God promised Joshua: **I will not leave you or forsake you**. God was promising to accompany His new leader every step of the way. The writer of Hebrews applied this great promise to believers today as well (Heb. 13:5). We have the promise of God's presence in every challenge we face.

God's giving Israel the land highlighted His sovereign work in and through His people. One day, they would possess the land He had promised to Abraham. The land was indeed a great possession, but years later, God would send His Son to secure the salvation of all who place their faith in Him. The gift of Jesus is the greatest gift of all!

(In PSG, p. 16) **How are God's presence and His promises connected? Can you have His promises without His presence? Explain.**

JOSHUA 1:5

⁵ No one will be able to stand against you as long as you live. I will be with you, just as I was with Moses. I will not leave you or forsake you.

A NEW TASK (JOSH. 1:6)

JOSHUA 1:6

⁶ Be strong and courageous, for you will distribute the land I swore to their fathers to give them as an inheritance.

VERSE 6

God now began to lay out Joshua's specific tasks. Joshua had heard the words ***be strong and courageous*** before. Moses had used them when he commissioned Joshua as his designated successor (Deut. 31:23). The expression occurs four times in the first chapter of Joshua (vv. 6,7,9,18).

The Book of Joshua may be summarized by the words *conquer* and *divide*. The first half of the book (chaps. 1–12) describes Israel's conquest of the land. The second half of the book (chaps. 13–24) describes God's people as they distributed the land among themselves. The words ***the land I swore to their fathers to give them*** again remind us of God's amazing purpose. God told Abraham He would give Abraham's descendants the land (Gen. 12:6–7). Over 400 years of slavery in Egypt may have caused many to wonder if God had forgotten His people. However, God was using their suffering in the amazing story He was writing, just as He uses everything in our lives for our good and His glory (Rom. 8:28). God is still writing His story!

The word ***inheritance*** suggests a close relationship between God and Israel. The Lord, as Israel's Heavenly Father, was giving the land to His children.

(In PSG, p. 18) **Why should we be strong and courageous as we pursue God's calling on our lives? What if God calls you to a task bigger than you could ever imagine?**

A NEW TRUST (JOSH. 1:7-9)

JOSHUA 1:7

⁷ Above all, be strong and very courageous to carefully observe the whole instruction My servant Moses commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right or the left, so that you will have success wherever you go.

VERSE 7

The opening words ***above all*** stress the importance of Joshua's faithful obedience to this next command. Again, God commanded Joshua to ***be strong and very courageous***, this time adding the word *very* to highlight the weight of the command. Joshua was to ***carefully observe*** the Lord's command. The Hebrew word translated ***instruction*** is *torah*. Though sometimes translated "law," the word has the sense of teaching or instruction. God's *torah* contains laws, decrees, and commands, but more than that, it provides instructional principles for life.

God's emphasis on the instruction as something His servant Moses commanded stresses the continuity between Moses' generation and Joshua's. The same God who empowered Moses would empower Joshua, and the same word God gave Moses would form a foundation for Joshua and the people.

The words ***do not turn from it to the right or the left*** highlight the importance of following God's Word exactly. To turn in either direction would mean to turn off the path God had designed and would lead to ruin.

If Joshua and the people followed God's word and His design for life, they would have success everywhere they went.

VERSE 8

God described Moses' words as **this book of instruction**. Again, the Hebrew word *torah* appears here. The words **must not depart from your mouth** represent a general prohibition that remains true in every circumstance. It is the same negative word used in the Ten Commandments that describes a prohibition against behavior that is always against God's plan (Ex. 20:3, 4, 7, 13-17).

The word translated **recite** literally means "meditate" and also appears in Psalm 1:2. The words **day and night** also appear in Psalm 1:2 and describe God's desire that we fill our minds with His Word at every moment of our lives. God wants His Word to impact all we do. When we view life through the lens of God's Word, we begin to see life as God does.

God then described the perfect result that would follow meditation on His Word. Joshua and the people would come to **carefully observe everything written in it** not only by knowing it but by living it. Only then would Joshua **prosper and succeed** in what he undertook.

VERSE 9

Verse 9 begins with a rhetorical question God asked Joshua. The beginning of the statement—**Haven't I commanded you**—stresses that God is issuing the command. God would equip Joshua to carry out whatever He commanded. Joshua could draw upon God's power to **be strong and courageous**.

The force of the command **do not be afraid or discouraged** is immediate, challenging Joshua to put aside any fear or discouragement at once. And why should Joshua cease from fear or discouragement? God gave him the reason: **The LORD your God is with you wherever you go**. Joshua stood armed with God's commission, God's word, and God's presence. He would find success through his obedience to God's command.

Believers can trust God to keep His promises (see 2 Cor. 1:20). God's presence provides strength and courage when we face life's challenges. Our calling and commission may not be the same as Joshua's, but we should trust God and His Word in all areas of our lives. When we accept His commission, trust in His Word, and count on His presence, we will find courage to face whatever He calls us to do.

(In PSG, p. 19) **Why is it necessary for a leader to constantly be reminded of the truths found in God's Word? Should constantly being reminded of God's truths be any less important for those who are not the leaders? Explain.**

JOSHUA 1:8

⁸ This book of instruction must not depart from your mouth; you are to recite it day and night so that you may carefully observe everything written in it. For then you will prosper and succeed in whatever you do.

JOSHUA 1:9

⁹ Haven't I commanded you: be strong and courageous? Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

LEAD GROUP BIBLE STUDY

FOCUS ATTENTION (FIRST THOUGHTS)

INTRODUCE: As the group arrives, lead them to discuss a difficult task they received either through work, church, or at home and the responsibility it took to carry out the task.

DISCUSS: *What were your initial thoughts when you were first informed about this new responsibility?* (PSG, p. 12)

EXPLAIN: *Today's session focuses on Joshua, who became Israel's leader after Moses' death on Mt. Nebo (Deut. 34:5-8). Introduce the Book of Joshua as the focus of the next six sessions using Pack Item 2 (Outlines of Joshua; Judges; Ruth) and Pack Item 4 (Time Line: Joshua; Judges; Ruth). Use the Understand the Context section in the PSG (pp. 13-14) to explain Joshua's role prior to becoming the leader of Israel. Focus on the character of Joshua: his qualifications for leadership (Ex. 17:8-16), his service to Moses (Ex. 24:13), his work as a courageous spy with Caleb (Num. 14:6-9), and his commissioning as the leader (Num. 27:18-23).*

TRANSITION: *Moses had served God and Israel well, but now he was gone and Joshua had assumed leadership. The passage describes how God commissioned His new leader for a new task. God promised to be with Joshua, but He also expected Joshua's complete obedience.* (PSG, p. 13)

EXPLORE THE TEXT

READ: Direct a volunteer to read Joshua 1:1-5. Lead the group to notice the similarities and differences between Joshua and Moses.

LEAD: Guide the group to understand why Moses could not enter the promised land. Point to Numbers 20:12 to see that it was because of Moses' disobedience that he could not enter the land.

ASK: *How did Moses' death open the door for a new chapter for Israel?*

EXPLAIN: *With this announcement, God summoned His children to divert their attention away from the past. He alerted them to the present and pointed them to the future.* (PSG, p. 15)

GUIDE: Lead the group to identify the promises that would be extended to the people of Israel based on Joshua's leadership (see vv. 1,3-5).

EXPLAIN: *The commissioning of Joshua as Israel's new leader provided assurance of God's continuing presence. God's presence promised the Israelites complete victory over their enemies in possession of the promised land. As the Lord had been with Moses, He would be with Joshua.* (PSG, p. 16)

DISCUSS: *How are God's presence and His promises connected? Can you have His promises without His presence? Explain. How can godly leaders be reminders of God's presence?* (PSG, p. 16) *How does a godly leader have influence beyond his or her immediate relationships?*

GUIDE: Point out that Joshua 1:5 is the memory verse for the week. Distribute copies of **Pack Item 5** (Bookmark: Memory Verses) to each person.

TRANSITION: *After God made promises to Joshua and the children of Israel, He began to encourage and call Joshua to be bold in his leadership.*

READ: Call on a volunteer to read Joshua 1:6, as the group listens for God's promise to Joshua.

DEFINE: Spend some time discussing the meaning of the words "strong" and "courageous." Use the information under Verse 6 on page 17 of the PSG for context.

ASK: *How do the terms "strong" and "courageous" reflect both the power of God and the call to leadership that was given to Joshua?*

EXPLAIN: *Both of these verbs, "be strong and courageous," are commands in the original Hebrew. The Lord did not merely ask Joshua to be strong and courageous; the Lord commanded Joshua to be strong and courageous. (PSG, p. 17)*

ASK: *Why should we be strong and courageous as we pursue God's calling on our lives? What if God calls you to a task bigger than you could ever imagine? (PSG, p. 18)*

TRANSITION: *The Lord had given the qualifications that it would take to be the leader of the children of Israel. Now it was time for Joshua to learn how he would accomplish and meet these expectations.*

ASK: *How does the gospel's affirmation of Jesus' being the Word in flesh (John 1:14) deepen our understanding of how following Jesus is our standard for daily living? What is the danger of obeying only a portion of God's Word?*

READ: Read Joshua 1:8-9 and lead the group to underline in their PSG or Bible the commands and promises of God.

EXPLAIN: *Even though God ordered Joshua to be strong and courageous, Joshua's success would be based upon his obedience to God's law. God was sovereignly working to bring the people to this place of entering the promised land, and yet He was allowing them to choose whether or not to obey Him. Joshua's obedience would be an example to his followers to trust in God and all His promises.*

ASK: *Why is it necessary for a leader to constantly be reminded of the truths found in God's Word? Should constantly being reminded of God's truths be any less important for those who are not the leaders? Explain. (PSG, p. 19)*

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE (IN MY CONTEXT)

TRANSITION: *All people face challenges, whether or not they are in leadership positions. Just as Joshua was called to be an example of strength and boldness for the children of Israel, so also are leaders in the body of Christ called to be that example. Believers should follow Joshua and other leaders' examples to meet daily challenges with boldness, strength, and reliance upon God's Word that is filled with His promises.*

DISCUSS: Lead the group to discuss the first question set under In My Context in the PSG (p. 20): *List your favorite promises of God. Identify how each promise you listed is tied to His presence. What distractions do you need to eliminate so you live more intentionally in the awareness of His presence?*

PRAY: Ask the Lord to embolden the group to be leaders who meet challenges as they rely upon His Word.



PRACTICE

- Share with your group the biography of a notable leader (political, business, military, and so forth) who is an outspoken Christian. Encourage your group to prepare to discuss how this individual's faith forms his or her leadership abilities.
- Contact anyone absent from the last group session, making sure they have a PSG. Include a personal invitation to attend Bible study next week.
- Connect with the group via email or social media to remind them of the memory verse for this week (Joshua 1:5).

MORE IDEAS

FOCUS ATTENTION (FIRST THOUGHTS)

Prepare to discuss the process of being commissioned as an officer in the armed forces. Discuss how these commissioned men and women understand the demands that will be placed on their lives and yet still choose to take on those challenges.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

- For further insight into Joshua 1:1-5, guide the group to complete the Bible Skill activity on page 15 of the PSG: *Read the following passages in your Bible: Exodus 17:8-16; 24:12-13; 32:17; 33:7-11; Numbers 27:18-23; Deuteronomy 31:23; 34:5-9. What lessons do you think Joshua learned under Moses' leadership that prepared him to be Israel's new leader?*
- To supplement the teaching of Joshua 1:6, compare the qualifications of leaders in the church as given by Paul (1 Tim. 3) with Joshua's qualifications.
- To enhance the study of Joshua 1:8-9, use the information under Verse 8 on page 19 to give background on the meaning of the word "recite."

SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE (IN MY CONTEXT)

Discuss practical ways that the group can communicate a word of encouragement to their church leaders. This could be those who are on staff or who serve in a volunteer role.

SUGGESTED MUSIC IDEA

Play the song and distribute the lyrics for "Courageous," by Casting Crowns, as the group gathers to begin the session.