



Session 1

COMMISSIONED

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

JOSHUA 1:1-9

¹ After the death of Moses the LORD's servant, the LORD spoke to Joshua son of Nun, who had served Moses: 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. ³ I have given you every place where the sole of your foot treads, just as I promised Moses. 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. 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. ⁶ Be strong and courageous, for you will distribute the land I



swore to their fathers to give them as an inheritance. 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. 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. 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."

Highlight the instructions given to Joshua. What do God's instructions reveal about the importance of God's word in Joshua's life?

Notice any repeated words or phrases in God's instructions to Joshua. What do these repeated words indicate about God's expectations of Joshua?

FIRST THOUGHTS

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.

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?

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

The first chapter of Joshua serves as a transition between this book and the preceding Book of Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy concluded with the death and burial of Moses (34:5-6); the Book of Joshua begins: "After the death of Moses the LORD's servant, the LORD spoke to Joshua." Deuteronomy 34:10 states: "No prophet has arisen again in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face." Consequently, the Israelites undoubtedly experienced some anxiety regarding Moses' successor. Who would now lead them? Could this person be as effective as Moses? The Lord prepared Joshua for such a task: "Joshua son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him" (Deut. 34:9). Joshua had been a constant companion to Moses. He had the opportunity to observe Moses' leadership style and decision-making approach, as well as his spiritual strengths and weaknesses. From an early period, the Lord readied Joshua for this particular time and need.

Joshua proved to be a gifted leader. He molded twelve loosely connected tribes into a respected, even feared, military. He led the Hebrews to victory after victory against superior numbers and fortified cities. We recognize Joshua's military prowess because his ambush at Ai (Josh. 8) is one of the earliest examples of the use of such a tactic in military history.

After conquering the land (Josh. 1-12), Joshua successfully divided it among the tribes (chaps. 13-19) and led them as they



began to transition to an agricultural, non-nomadic lifestyle. What greater acclaim might be attributed to any leader other than the fact that “Israel worshiped Yahweh throughout Joshua’s lifetime” (24:31)?

EXPLORE THE TEXT

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

VERSE 1

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

The death of Moses the LORD’s servant must have been a devastating event for the Hebrews. This man, who knew the Lord in such an unusual manner (“face to face,” Deut. 34:10), led the Israelites out of Egypt and out of a bondage for which they suffered for 430 years (Ex. 12:40). The Lord gave the Israelites the Law through Moses, as well as instructions for the construction of the tabernacle and the worship that was to take place in it. Moses led the Israelites through one of their most trying experiences, the 40-year wilderness wandering. He led them to the plains of Moab (east of the Jordan River), on the cusp of entering into the promised land. Doubtless, the Israelites joyfully anticipated crossing the Jordan River and entering the land that the Lord had promised their forefathers (Deut. 34:4). The death of Moses must have suppressed much of this joy.

Verse 1 describes Moses as *the LORD’s servant*. While the Hebrew word can be translated “servant,” it can also be rendered as “slave.” Similarly, Paul used the Greek word for slave (*doulos*) to refer to himself (a “slave” of Christ Jesus; see Rom. 1:1; Gal. 1:10; Phil. 1:1). The word *servant* demonstrates Moses’ humble submission to the Lord.

While Moses is described as *the LORD’s servant*, *Joshua* is described as one *who had served Moses*. This participle in the original text is a different word from the noun previously translated as “servant.” This word communicates the idea of a chief assistant. Joshua did not serve Moses as a slave but as an assistant.

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?

VERSES 2-3

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

Notice the stark reality: ***"Moses My servant is dead."*** 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: ***Now you and all the people prepare to cross over the Jordan.***

The Lord communicated His plan as though the victory had already been accomplished: ***I have given you every place where the sole of your foot treads.*** The Israelites had to fight for the land, but God had ***promised*** the land to Moses, leaving no doubt as to their victory. Biblical writers sometimes used 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 and seated us in the heavens" (Eph. 2:6). Our future resurrection is so certain that Paul speaks of it as a past event. The Hebrews' possession of the promised land was as good as done—because God promised it.

VERSES 4-5

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. 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.

The expanse of the land must have been difficult for many of the Israelites to fathom. Fewer than 50 years earlier, the ancestors of these same Hebrews dwelled as slaves in Egypt. Now they were free. Their ancestors eked out a meager living in a foreign land. Now they would have their own land—a large land.

The Lord insisted: **No one will be able to stand against you.** What assurance did the Israelites have for success? The sovereign Lord promised, **I will be with you, just as I was with Moses. I will not leave you or forsake you.** 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. The writer of the New Testament Book of Hebrews applied this promise to believers today (Heb. 13:5).

The Hebrew name *Joshua* means “Yahweh is salvation.” The name *Jesus* is the Greek form of the name *Joshua* (see Matt. 1:21). As God gave the promised land to the Hebrews, He gave His Son to all humankind. Jesus, by His death, offers salvation to everyone who believes (Rom. 1:16).

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?

A NEW TASK (JOSH. 1:6)

VERSE 6

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

The Lord promised Joshua complete victory. One day Joshua would ***distribute the land ... as an inheritance*** to the Israelites. But he knew before any distribution of land could occur, the land had to be conquered. He knew a formidable task awaited them. Some Israelites may have insisted on their inability to take the land. Perhaps someone again reiterated that they could not go up against the people because, in contrast to the current inhabitants of the promised land, they were but “grasshoppers” (see Num. 13:31-33). Any person, including Joshua, might have succumbed to fear and cowered at the difficult task ahead. But the Lord called Joshua to ***be strong and courageous***.

The Hebrew verb translated ***be strong*** communicates the idea of physical strength. Joshua needed to be physically strong for the grueling events of the immediate future. The second verb, translated ***be ... courageous***, can also be translated as “be bold” or “be assured.” It communicates the idea of confidence. Joshua would soon face the fortified city of Jericho. The Lord instructed him to wage war not with sword and shield, but with ram’s horns (6:13). Where would Joshua find the boldness to undertake this task in such an unexpected, even irrational, manner? He would find boldness in the fact that the Lord had commissioned him and promised to be with him.

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.

After the crucifixion, the disciples (minus Thomas) “gathered together with the doors locked because of their fear of the Jews” (John 20:19). We do not need to be too harsh toward the disciples. They, after all, had witnessed Jesus die a cruel death. They feared the same people who had murdered Jesus might now desire to kill His followers.

Days later, Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice, and boldly proclaimed the good news of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:14). Peter preached that lawless people nailed Jesus to a cross and killed Him (Acts 2:23). One can almost hear Peter’s voice increase in volume as he proclaimed that God raised Jesus from the dead (Acts 2:24). Peter preached with boldness on the Day of Pentecost. What had happened to Peter? What happened from the time he recoiled with the other disciples behind locked doors to the time he stood boldly and preached the gospel? In a few words: the risen Christ appeared to them, commissioned them, and promised His presence.



Jesus commissions every believer: “Go ... make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19). Jesus expects every believer to be a witness for Him. In order to be effective witnesses for Christ, we need both strength and courage. This is the source of our strength and courage: we go in His authority (Matt. 28:18), and we go with the promise of His presence and power (Matt. 28:20; Acts 1:8).

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?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Scripture*

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

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

VERSE 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.

God demanded that Joshua be strong and courageous in his task of conquering the promised land. Using the same two verbs as in verse 6, the Lord also charged Joshua to ***be strong and very courageous*** in following His Law.

The phrase ***carefully observe*** translates two verbs in Hebrew. The first verb can be rendered as “keep” or “watch.” The second verb has the idea of “do.” God instructed Joshua to keep and do His whole instruction. Many believers will recognize the word *Torah*, here translated as ***instruction***. The word *Torah* can refer to a commandment, a word, a decree, a custom, or a prohibition. In Judaism, the word *Torah* refers to the first five books

of the Old Testament. The word can be translated as “instruction” and “guidance.” With ***the whole instruction***, the Lord did not give Joshua the option of choosing to observe some of His laws while choosing to neglect other laws. Neither do we have the option of choosing to obey only the parts of the Bible that we find to be easy, convenient, or agreeable to us. God expects us to be fully obedient to His entire written revelation.

VERSES 8-9

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. 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."

Joshua's reciting the ***book of instruction ... day and night*** would result naturally in his awareness of its content. God desires that we fill our mind with His Word (see Ps. 1:2). He 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.

The importance of carefully observing this book of instruction cannot be overstated. ***For then you will prosper and succeed in whatever you do.*** The Lord told Joshua that his success would depend on obedience to God's word. The success of believers in serving the Lord hinges on our obedience to the word of the Lord.

Finally, the Lord told Joshua: ***Do not be afraid or discouraged.*** Joshua's fear and discouragement could be managed by recognizing that God promised to be with him in whatever he did.

Our calling and commission may not be the same as Joshua's, but we can still trust God and His Word in all areas of our lives. When we accept the Lord's commission, trust in His Word, and count on His presence, we will find courage to face whatever He calls us to do.

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.



IN MY CONTEXT

- Believers can trust God to keep all of His promises, with Jesus being the ultimate promise kept (see Isa. 53).
- When facing challenges, believers should draw strength and courage from God’s presence.
- Believers do not have the option of obeying only a part of God’s Word. God expects His people to obey His Word, all of it, in every area of life.

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?

Share with your Bible study group a challenging circumstance you faced when the presence and power of Jesus sustained you. How does hearing the stories of others encourage you?

List things you are currently doing to discover and to be reminded of the truths found in God’s Word. What actions do you need to take to more readily discover and be reminded of His truth?

MEMORY VERSE

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.
—Joshua 1:5