

Live Strong. Facing Life with Faith
The Encouragement of Faith/ Detailed Notes Week One
Joshua 1: 1-9

Eating healthy requires time, forethought, preparation, and energy. So does healthy Bible study. A healthy approach to Scripture is realizing the Bible is a book about God. We cannot know God unless He reveals Himself to us...and the Bible does that.

The Bible is not primarily a book about us. It is not primarily a place to find a quick fix for what ails us, or a feel-good promise to soothe us, or a magical road map to direct us. While indeed the Bible comforts and directs us, it is first and foremost a book about God.

As we approach Scripture for the purpose of study, remember:

- All Scripture is profitable, even the parts we do not like or do not completely understand.
- All Scripture reveals God...His works, His words, His nature.
- When we see God first, the Holy Spirit will guide us to apply Scripture to ourselves and our circumstances.
- We study Scripture with our minds not our feelings. Feelings may follow, but they cannot lead. (Romans 12:2, Ephesians 4:23-24).

As we become more familiar with the Bible, it is important to see the big picture. The Old and New Testament are a cohesive unfolding of God's redemptive plan for mankind. It is all one story; first, in the Old Testament, seen through God's dealings with the nation of Israel. The story continues in the New Testament through Jesus and the church.

When we study an Old Testament book, like Joshua, we need to understand that indeed the nation of Israel was expected to obey God's law. But the nation of Israel was not obeying in order to gain a relationship with God. They already had a relationship with God. God chose to have a relationship with them, based on His love (Deuteronomy 7:5-9).

The Old Testament book of Joshua is a new beginning for Israel. Moses, their leader is dead. The younger, less experienced, Joshua is now the leader of the nation. He is a different kind of leader than Moses. Joshua is a military leader, given the assignment of leading Israel to take possession of the Promised Land.

Everything about life for Israel is about to change. They will no longer be fed with manna. Their clothes and shoes, which never wore out in the desert, will now need to be replaced. The people will have battles to fight. They would settle in new territory and begin a brand-new way of living. They will also have a new and personal relationship with the God of Abraham. While certainly these are exciting times, they are also unsettling times for the people and their leader Joshua.

Three things to keep in mind as we study principles from Joshua.

1. Everything in Old Testament points us to the New Testament. The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed. The New Testament is the Old Testament revealed.
2. The crossing of the Jordan River in the Old Testament is NOT a picture of believers crossing from life to death; from earth to heaven. It is a picture of believers in Christ leaving the old life of sin and entering the fullness of life in Christ.
3. The people of Israel inherited a land. New Testament believers inherit a life. The principles of Joshua are mirrored in the book of Ephesians. Just as Israel was given all of the land they would possess, we have all of Christ and must learn to take possession of (live fully in) all we have been given in Christ.

Joshua 1:1-9 is a personal word from God to Joshua. Twenty times in nine verses, God uses the words “you” or “yours”. It is personal. It is as if God has placed His hands on Joshua’s face and said, “Listen. Be Encouraged.”

Three times God says to Joshua, “Be strong and courageous” (1:6,7,9). “Be strong” is a battle scene phrase. It means *to be attached*. “Courageous” means *to have a steadfast mind, resolute*. God is reminding Joshua to stay attached to the Lord. Courage will be found as the leader keeps his mind focused and attached to God Himself.

God is telling Joshua to have faith in God. Anytime you and I encounter change or new beginnings, whether they are tumultuous or exciting, it is an opportunity to exercise our faith in the Lord. We are to have confidence in three things—just like Joshua.

1. God’s Promises are True
2. God’s Principles are Right
3. God’s Presence is Sure

I. God’s Promises are True.

Reading Joshua 1:2-6 four things are notable.

- A. In verse 2 God says, “I am giving” but in verse 3 he says, “I have already given”. Then He adds, “Every place the sole of your foot treads, I have given...”

God promised the land to Israel. It was theirs. BUT they would have to take possession of what was already theirs. Much like a gift. If I gave you a gift, you must receive it, open it, use it, and enjoy it. It is yours even if you throw the wrapped box in a closet and never open it. It is still yours, but you have missed the blessing of using it.

The people of Israel must take possession—every place they step is a sign of taking possession. They must participate in the process—not to win the land, but to possess what is already theirs.

- B. God defines the boundaries of the land. (Vs. 4) The people are not free to take anything, anywhere. God gives specific boundaries they are stay within. Yet the boundaries are gracious plenty for the entire nation.
- C. God would not forsake His people in the process of possessing the land. In verse 5, God tells Joshua He will not forsake or fail Joshua.
“Fail” means *to relax the hands or let down*.” “To Forsake” means *to relinquish or set free*. God will not relax His grip on Joshua. He will not forsake, relinquish or set Joshua free. These are marvelous truths when we realize it is God who is doing the holding on to Joshua, not Joshua holding onto God. Big difference.
- D. Verse 6, God says He will give them possession of the land—this is a **permanent** possession. He also says He swore to give the land to them. “To swear,” means God took an oath based on His own authority and on His own character. Joshua can take comfort in the fact that the promises of God flow from the unchanging, flawless, faithful, holy character of God. God does not lie. God does not change. God’s Word is as sure as His character. The promises of God are true.

The Bible is filled with Promises for you and me. When we fail to live victoriously, the problem is not with God. The problem for most of us is we are either ignorant of the promises of God or we are unwilling to live in those promises. Remember, Israel inherited a land. Believers in Christ have inherited a life.

Ephesians tells us what is ours in Christ. Ephesians 1-3 tells us all that we are and all that we have in Christ. We have redemption, forgiveness, grace, and the seal of the Holy Spirit (and so much more). We got all of Jesus we are ever going to get. Now we must learn to live in the fullness of all we have been

given. We must take possession of all that is ours. Also, these are permanent blessings. God is not fickle. He does not withdraw His salvation when we are unfaithful. Our salvation is based on the faithfulness of God ---not our faithfulness.

Those four things we learned about Joshua and the people of Israel pertain to us as well.

- A. We have everything we need to live in victory. We have the wealth of God's promises, but we must take possession of them.
- B. There are boundaries. Just as God marked off the boundaries of the land, the promises of God have boundaries too. We cannot claim anything we chose and then expect God to come through. We cannot come up with great ideas for God and then hold God accountable to make them come to pass. God's promises are abundant and plentiful, but we cannot exercise wholesale imagination and think we are living in the promises.
- C. As we walk through this life, **God will not let go of us**. THIS IS IMPORTANT. You and I are not holding onto the Lord. He is holding onto us. He will not relax His hands when life changes or becomes difficult. He will not relinquish us even if we wrestle with Him. His grip on our lives is sure. What a blessing!
- D. The promises of God STILL flow from the unchangeable faithful character of God. That is good news as well. His promises are always true.

There is, however, a connection between the promises of God and our living in the wealth of those promises.

II. The Principles of God are Right (Joshua 1:7-8)

Joshua is again commanded to "be strong and courageous". In these two verses we also see the word "law". Sometimes we bristle at the word "law" because we think rules and regulations. Yet the Bible never speaks of the LAW as simply rules to follow. The law of God is a nobler mindset. It is a higher way of thinking. It is the means God used for His people to become all God wanted them to be. They would reach their greatest potential as a nation if they followed God's way of living.

Furthermore, God was not giving the law to make Israel a bunch of legalistic robots. The ultimate goal of obedience is freedom. God wants them—and us---to be completely free; free from sin and its' hideous, crippling consequences.

Verse 7 reminds Joshua not to turn from the law. Verse 8 says, "do not let it depart from your mouth" and "to meditate on it day and night". The Word of God is to be part of our fabric. We not only get into the Word, but the Word gets into us—and it changes us from the inside out. It transforms our thinking (Romans 12:1-2). When our thinking is transformed, our behavior will be as well. New beginnings, changes, or unsettling circumstances are never a time to neglect the principles of Godly living.

The result of being changed by the Word of God and living according to the Word of God is **prosperity** and **success**. AHHHH be careful. Those two words are often abused and misunderstood.

In the original language, **prosperity** means to *become mighty and push forward*. When we are living according to the precepts of God, we live victoriously, moving forward into the land of blessing, the victorious Christian life, the life of Promise.

The word **success** means *understanding because you have applied knowledge*. We move from head knowledge to an experiential knowledge of the ways of God. **Success is making the connection between the promises of God and the way we live. Success and Prosperity is living the abundant life Jesus speaks of in John 10:10. "I have come that they might have life and have it more abundantly."**

III. The Presence of God is Sure

God does not give Joshua words of encouragement and then tell him to march into Canaan and do the best he can. NO! God promises to go with Joshua. For the third time in Joshua 1:9, God restates the phrase, "*Be strong and courageous*". He adds "*Have I not commanded you?*" It is a verbal command of a superior officer to a subordinate. Then God says, "*Do not fear or be dismayed*". The word dismayed means "a breaking that demoralizes and eventually causes panic, a cracking under stress." God is telling Joshua, "*Don't crack under the pressure*". Verse 9 is a call to courage and confidence in God. **It is a call to faith.** Courage would not come because the people are strong warriors or Joshua an excellent commander. Courage would come as they realized THE LORD, Yahweh, the covenant keeping God would be with them.

When the Old Testament speaks of God being with someone, He is not a passive observer but rather an active participant in the circumstances of life. Joshua and the people of Israel would not take a single step into the Promised Land without the presence of the living, almighty God.

As wonderful as that truth is, we have something even more wonderful. **We have the presence of God IN us!** We never go through any change, any new beginning, or any unsettling circumstance by ourselves. *God is with us and in us in the form of the Holy Spirit of Christ.* Certainly, times will be hard. Things will become difficult. The road may get rocky. But God will be there. He will not let us go. His presence is sure!

Are you facing an unsettling change? Has life taken an unexpected detour? If so, you are being called to exercise faith. You are being asked to trust God enough to obey Him, even when you cannot clearly see what is ahead. Listen to God's encouragement. His promises are still true. His principles are still right for your life. His presence is still sure. Rest in these wonderful truths. Be encouraged.