

SESSION 1

ACCEPT YOUR LEADERSHIP ROLE



When have you made
a decision to do something
and then thought,
"Am I ready for this?"

THE POINT

Leaders surrender to God's authority and direction.

THE BIBLE **MEETS** LIFE

On the eve of D-Day, General Dwight D. Eisenhower was about to send thousands of troops across the English Channel into the teeth of the German army. He'd planned and prepared, but uncertainty lay ahead. In fact, Eisenhower was so uncertain about the success of D-Day that he drafted a statement taking full blame should the mission fail.¹

You and I don't carry that kind of stress, nor do we bear that level of responsibility. Yet there are days when the weight on our shoulders feels heavier than ever—maybe even heavier than we can bear.

These are the moments when we must lead well.

Joshua was another leader standing on the banks of a body of water with enemies waiting on the other side. He was full of questions about the role he'd been given and anxious to make the right decisions.

Much can be learned from Joshua about how to lead in whatever role we've been given.

Some 800 people were killed in a botched rehearsal for the D-Day landings. Allied commanders ordered a blackout on all information about the attack and some families never found out how their relatives died.²

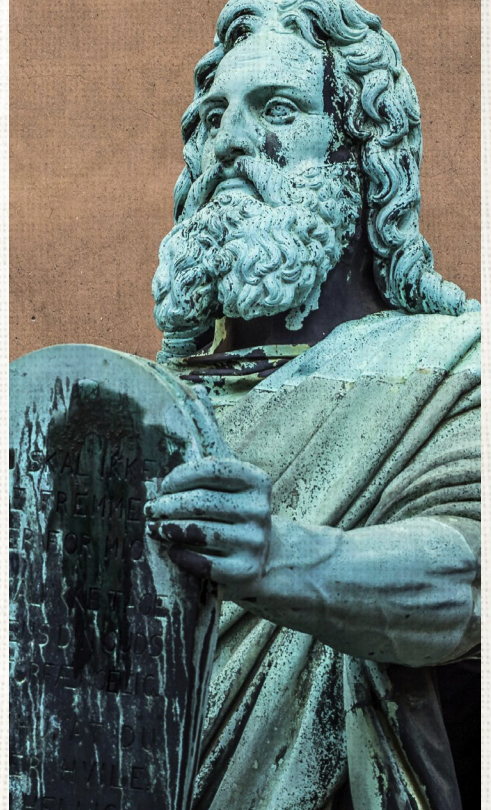


WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

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."



The Setting

God had led His people through Moses for a lengthy and eventful time—from enslavement in Egypt, through the 10 plagues, out of Egypt, across the Red Sea, and for 40 years in the wilderness. Moses had been at the helm through the giving of the Law, surveying of the promised land, and constructing of the tabernacle. Though some had challenged Moses' leadership, most of those alive had known no other. Now Joshua had to fill those shoes.

JOSHUA 1:1-6

Do you see yourself as a leader? You are. In fact, everyone leads. Even if your influence only touches the life of one person—that's leadership. And that's why the Book of Joshua is for you. Its message for us is that God is in control as we stand on the shore of leadership.

- ▶ **God organized all that had happened up to this point in Joshua's life.** Joshua had likely seen the power of God as He brought His people out of Egypt.
- ▶ **God organized the events surrounding the people Joshua was leading.** God had been faithful to the promises He made to their ancestors hundreds of years earlier.
- ▶ **God was ready to organize the events ahead.** He mapped out the steps of Joshua and the people as they set out to conquer the land God promised them. As for the people who would threaten them on the way, God had a response. "Nobody will be able to withstand my plan, Joshua, if you follow closely to what I'm saying."


Where in your past
can you see proof that
God can be trusted?

When I drive, I like to be one or two turns ahead in my thinking.

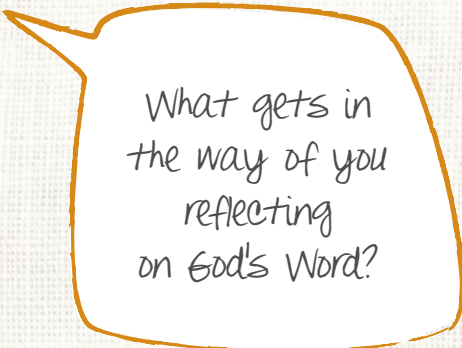
If someone is with me, giving me directions, I'll ask, "What's ahead? What's the next turn?" If I'm using my GPS, I like to scroll ahead in see what's coming. Many people approach leadership the same way. They want to know what's next—every potential challenge—so they can be prepared.

But we aren't in control, God is. And we must trust Him for what lies ahead. He'll reveal what we need in His perfect time.

The GPS was originally developed for military use in 1978. An executive decree in the 1980s made it available to the general population. The development of cheap microprocessors in the 1990s led to the small GPS units you can buy today.⁴



In a recent study, the University of Notre Dame found that going to sleep shortly after learning new material is a very beneficial way to recall important information.³



What gets in the way of you reflecting on God's Word?

Your Fears

At some point—today or sometime in our future—God will call you to step up and lead. And leadership can create tension in our hearts. We become responsible for others when we step up to lead. List the top three fears you have about stepping into a position of leadership.

1.

2.

3.

JOSHUA 1:7-8

God has spoken to us through the Bible. When God spoke to Joshua the night before moving into the land they had been promised, He reminded Joshua that it was His Word that would guide Joshua in carrying out his leadership role.

How was Joshua to stay centered on God's Word? The same way we are to stay focused on God's Word—meditate (think) on the Scriptures constantly. Meditating on God's Word clears your mind of your own thoughts and desires. It means you center your thoughts on what God has said and then declare it out loud so that you remember it and obey it. Joshua did this very thing to prepare to lead. Obeying the Scriptures would enable Joshua to "prosper and succeed" (v. 8) in his mission. We can hold to this promise as well.

We all lead in some capacity, and with God's Word as our guide, we can stay focused on the end goal.



What does it look like for a Christian to be strong and courageous in today's culture?

JOSHUA 1:9

Everything God says is important, but in this passage God said something of incredible importance to Joshua, and we know that because He said it again and again. In verse 5, God comforted Joshua with the promise that He would be with him and would not leave or forsake him. God then added in verse 9 that He would be with Joshua wherever he went. As a result, Joshua did not have to "be afraid or discouraged" (v. 9), and so God commanded him three times to "be strong and courageous" (vv. 6,7,9). Fear and discouragement are natural feelings, but we can overcome those feelings through the presence of the Holy Spirit.

- ▶ **Be strong and courageous when you consider the great task in front of you.** God understands that when we consider our responsibilities as leaders, we'll sometimes feel overwhelmed. So He says to us, "Be strong and courageous; I will be with you."
- ▶ **Be strong and courageous so you can respond carefully to God's Word.** At times the Bible calls us to step outside our comfort zone. The Bible may call us to lead in a direction that's not very popular. If we are to "prosper and succeed" (v. 8) in our leadership, we must be courageous.
- ▶ **Be strong and courageous as you move forward.** At times we feel ready to move forward. Other times we are ready to give up, overcome by fears. This is when we need to hold onto the comforting promise: "The LORD your God is with you wherever you go" (v. 9).

Share this

In what area of your life do you need to step up and lead?

"A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way."¹⁵

—JOHN C. MAXWELL

APPLY IT

Everybody leads in some capacity—everybody. So how will you apply the truths from this passage to your life?

- ▶ **Own your role.** Spend some time writing down the different areas of life in which you lead others or influence people. Own your role as a leader.
- ▶ **Memorize.** Memorize Joshua 1:8 and allow its truth to strengthen and encourage you.
- ▶ **Connect.** Connect with others who lead in the same places and ways you do—school, home, church. You're not alone in your journey. God is with you, and He provides others to encourage and help you grow as a leader.

"Am I ready for this?" It's OK to ask that question. We all feel overwhelmed at one time or another. Yet you don't have to be overwhelmed. God is in control and He is with you.



Saved By Faith

Rahab's story of faith is not forgotten or overlooked in Scripture. Joshua 6:25 says she lived "in Israel until this day," referring to Rahab's descendants among the people of Israel.



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A PERSONAL STATEMENT

Luke 5:32

Jesus made many statements about His mission throughout His life. And now His mission is yours. God has called you to be a leader. Take some time to read about the mission of Jesus in Matthew 9:10; Luke 19:10; John 12:47; John 10:10; and John 18:37. Every leader has a mission statement. Write yours below in your own words and, as you lead, allow it to be a reminder to you of your mission.



LEAD WELL

Joshua 1:8

Believe it or not, we all have people who look up to us. Regardless of how popular you are, someone looks up to you. Is it a brother, a friend, a little kid at church? On your phone or in the space below, create a list of all the people you may be in a position to influence. Look at this list daily to remind yourself of how important it is for you to follow God's direction. As a leader, how you surrender to God impacts how others surrender to God.



Who am I in a position to influence?



A tip:

- Connect with someone you look up to and talk about his or her walk with Jesus. Thank this person for being a positive influence in your life.

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