

Moments *for* You

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Theme: Joshua



CALLED TO OVERCOME

Life is filled with challenges. It's just the way it is. You can't know victory unless you have faced the challenge of defeat. You won't appreciate joy until you have endured heartache. How we face the challenges of life will determine whether we are overcome or become overcomers. As the book of Joshua begins, Moses had recently died and Joshua becomes Israel's leader. This book records the ups and downs Joshua faces in bringing his people into the Promised Land.

THE COMMISSION

"The LORD said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, 'Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory. No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you'" (Joshua 1:1–5).

Don't miss the power and maybe the intimidation of these words. Joshua had been Moses' assistant for 40 years. In many ways he was more than trained for the task before him. On the other hand, this new responsibility may very well have been very overwhelming. The Promised Land was filled with inhabitants who would not give up that land without a fierce fight. It was a big job, and an

enormous undertaking. Joshua had incredible confidence in the promise and power of God, but he may have felt somewhat small and inadequate.

THE PROMISE

Of course, God understood the hesitancy of Joshua. He encouraged Joshua with these words: *"Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land ... be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law ... Be strong and courageous ... for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go"* (Joshua 1:6–9).

Three times God says, "Be strong and courageous." Each time, God also gives Joshua a reason why he can have courage. God had already given the land to the people. It was theirs for the taking. God didn't tell Joshua that it was going to be easy, but He told him that he would succeed by the strength of the Lord.

Please understand that God tells you the exact same thing! In the book of Hebrews this same promise of God's presence is applied to believers: "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). John reminded us that "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4). Jesus said, "In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). The Bible is filled with promises just like these.

As we face the challenges of life, God wants us to know that He has not left us to "fend for ourselves." He is with us. We do not have to rely on our own strength, because God has given us His strength through the indwelling of His Spirit. We can face most anything if we can just re-

member that we are children of God. The strong arms of God hold us up. The matchless wisdom of God leads us forward. The unfailing promise of God makes victory sure.

THE RESPONSE

“All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you. Only may the LORD your God be with you, as he was with Moses!” (Joshua 1:16–17).

Joshua was ready to move forward in God’s strength, and the people say, “We’re with you Joshua!” As you read further into Joshua you will see that the people went into battle and were courageous. God fought for them in remarkable ways. But note something else. God had prepared to give them 300,000 square miles of land. History shows that the people claimed only 30,000 square miles. That’s only 10% of the blessing God had in store for them. These people started strong but lacked the endurance to obtain all God had for them.

Please heed the warning. We can start out fervently for the Lord but become impatient or even bored with the process. We lack perseverance. If we want to overcome the obstacles of life we must dig in and be ready to follow faithfully for the rest of our lives. Like Paul, we must “not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13–14).

—Bruce Goettsche, condensed

FINDING COURAGE

When Joshua stood at the edge of the Promised Land, trying to prepare his heart for the hostility and uncertainty he would meet, God exhorted

him to “Be strong and courageous.” God leads Joshua, and us, into a sure shelter from our fears, into an arsenal stronger than the opposition, and into a well deep enough to satisfy our souls—even in trials. He prepares us for the battles of faith, the everyday and the extraordinary, by training us to read His word *well*. We will not find strength and courage for suffering without learning to read, *really* read, the Bible.

READ WITH YOUR MIND

The courage we need in our hearts begins with learning to focus our minds. If we have read the Bible for any amount of time, we have realized just how much “reading” we can do without really reading anything. Our eyes can roll over words, and paragraphs, and even pages, while our minds run off somewhere else. Some of us are persistently afraid or stressed because we have forgotten how to fix our minds on God long enough to hear from Him.

God says to Joshua, “Be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. *Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left*” (Joshua 1:7). We must be careful to discern traps and errors on the left *and* the right. This kind of reading requires more patience, attention, and thinking than many of us are used to giving the Bible.

READ WITH YOUR HEART

The words of God were never meant to stay in the mind. The mind can become a kind of cul-de-sac for what we know, cutting our theology off from our struggles and fears. We read and read and read, and never *feel*. God wants the roots of truth to drive themselves into all our feelings—about Him, about the world, about ourselves and our troubles.

Again, He says, “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall *meditate on it* day and night” (Joshua 1:8). So we work to massage what we read into our hearts until we feel its reality. Analysis and understanding will not be enough for God’s truth to impact our life; we need to read, and pray, and think until we *feel* the Bible, and delight in what we read (Psalm 1:2).

READ WITH YOUR HANDS

Thinking without meditating will undermine our Bible reading, and so will thinking and even feeling without doing (James 2:17). Some of us feel loved, inspired, or even convicted when we read, but then we do nothing. We read and read and read, and never *change*.

Two words are massively important and often missed in the Lord’s charge to Joshua: “Be strong and very courageous, being careful *to do* according to all the law” (Joshua 1:7). Obedience is critical to courage. We will find what we need for unusually challenging times ahead by committing to do whatever God says at all times. Full courage may not come that moment, or for some time, but we won’t find real courage *in the Lord* without taking real steps toward Him.

READ WITH YOUR MOUTH

The Lord says, “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your *mouth*” (Joshua 1:8). Part of finding fresh courage, and persevering in courage, is reminding someone else to be courageous. Some years earlier, Moses gave the people a similar command: “Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart *from your heart* all the days of your life. *Make them known* to your children and your children’s children” (Deuteronomy 4:9).

Teaching the children was not just about making sure the next generation knew what to believe, but also about the *present* generation *remembering* what to believe. Jesus weaves this same dynamic into the Christian life (Matthew 28:19–20). Go tell someone what God in Christ has done for you, and then keep telling them and anyone else who will listen. Who might need to hear something you read in the Bible this week that stabilized your hope, deepened your joy, and strengthened you to persevere in obedience to Christ?

READ WITH YOUR GOD

Finally, and most importantly, read the Bible with your God. All our reading, and feeling, and speaking, and even obeying will be in vain if He is not with us.

The Lord says to Joshua, “Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God *is with you* wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9). The ultimate source of any real strength is not in words, phrases, pages, or spiritual disciplines, but in God. Every day when we sit down to read, *He* is the goal, the barometer, the prize. Have we tasted and seen His goodness again? —Marshall Segal, adapted

BE ALERT

We read in Joshua chapters 8 and 9 that while Israel was at Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim, reaffirming their commitment to the Lord, the kings in Canaan were getting ready to attack. They had heard about the defeat of Jericho and Ai and were not about to give up without a fight. But Israel’s greatest danger wasn’t the confederation of the armies of Canaan. It was a group of men from Gibeon who were about to enter the camp and deceive Joshua and the princes of Israel.

WHAT THE GIBEONITES DID

Gibeon was located only twenty-five miles from the camp of Israel at Gilgal and was on Joshua's list to be destroyed. In Deuteronomy 20:10–20, God's law stated that Israel must destroy all the cities in Canaan. If after the conquest Israel was involved in other wars, they could offer peace to cities that were outside the land (see also 7:1–11). Somehow the Gibeonites knew about this law and decided to use it for their own protection.

The Gibeonites assembled a group of men and equipped them to look like an official delegation from a foreign city. Their clothing, food, and equipment were all designed to give the impression that they had been on a long and difficult journey from a distant city.

WHY THEY SUCCEEDED

The reason is simple: Joshua and the princes of Israel were impetuous and didn't take time to consult the Lord. They walked by sight and not by faith. After listening to the strangers' speech and examining the evidence, Joshua and his leaders concluded that the men were telling the truth. They depended on their own senses, examined the "facts," discussed the matter, and agreed in their conclusion. It was all very logical and convincing, but it was all wrong.

Moses had told the Jews, "Be careful not to make a treaty with those who live in the land where you are going, or they will be a snare among you" (Exodus 34:12 NIV). But in their haste Joshua and the Jewish leaders broke God's law and made a covenant with the enemy. Since their oath was sworn in the name of the Lord (Joshua 9:18), it could not be broken. Joshua and the princes of Israel had sworn to their own hurt (Psalm 15:4; Ecclesiastes 5:1–7), and

there was no way to revoke their oath or be released from their promise.

HOW TO BE ON GUARD

Satan sometimes comes as a devouring lion (1 Peter 5:8), and sometimes as a deceiving serpent (2 Corinthians 11:3). We must be alert and protected by the spiritual armor God has provided for us (Ephesians 6:10–18). Since the enemy even knows how to use the word of God for their own purposes, God's people must keep alert (Matthew 4:5–7).

The will of God comes from the heart of God (Psalm 33:11), and He delights to make it known to His children when He knows they are humble and willing to obey. "If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know" (John 7:17) is a basic principle for victorious Christian living.

Like Joshua and the nation of Israel, God's people today are living in enemy territory and must constantly exercise caution. When you believe the enemy instead of seeking the mind of the Lord, you can expect to get into trouble.

—Warren W. Wiersbe, adapted from *Be Strong*

5 WAYS WE SEE JESUS IN JOSHUA

The book of Joshua, with its epic account of Israel's conquest of Canaan, is a favorite for many. Accounts of larger-than-life miracles make the book powerful and memorable: the miracles of crossing the Jordan River, the collapse of Jericho's walls, the halting of the sun and moon in the sky. Joshua is a great and godly (albeit imperfect) example of how to live a life of faith in obedience to the Lord.

Embedded in the historical narratives are some aspects of Joshua's experience that hint at the person and work of Jesus. Here are five.

1. LEADER WHO FOLLOWS THE LORD'S LAW

Throughout the book, God tells Joshua to dedicate himself to the law of the Lord, not departing from it to the right or to the left, meditating on it, and practicing its precepts (Joshua 1:6–8). He is promised military success if he obeys the law of the Lord.

In a greater way, Jesus perfectly kept the law. It was His bread, His food, His very purpose and mission. If Joshua led well by following the Lord and his word, how much more did Jesus, who perfectly obeyed the will of His Father?

2. DELIVERER WHO RESCUES SINNERS

It would have been natural for Joshua to forget about the promise of protection made to Rahab during the battle for Jericho. But Joshua keeps this promise by having the spies whom Rahab saved become her saviors. Her promiscuous work does not prevent Joshua from “saving alive” Rahab, her father’s household, and all who belong to her (Joshua 6:22–5).

Jesus also offers salvation to the undeserving. Paul wrote in Romans 5:6–8 of Christ’s mercy toward us: “For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

3. WARRIOR WHO CONQUERS HIS ENEMIES

Joshua is often remembered as a warrior, a conqueror who fulfilled God’s command to destroy the Canaanite armies. At the battle of Ai, he is credited with burning the city and executing its king (Joshua 8:28–29). He executed the kings of the southern Canaanite coalition (Joshua 10:26) and had the city of Hazor burned in the north (Joshua 11:11). God’s

promise to Joshua that no one would stand against him all the days of his life (Joshua 1:5) was proven true throughout the conquest.

Jesus is also presented as a conquering warrior at times in the New Testament, especially regarding the spiritual realm: “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8). At the cross, God the Father “disarmed the rulers and authorities” of the angelic world “and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in him” (Colossians 2:15). Jesus defeated death through His death and resurrection so that we can say, with the apostle Paul: “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” (1 Corinthians 15:55).

4. PROPHET WHO SPEAKS THE LORD'S WORDS

Joshua functions as prophet for Israel at several points. He speaks to the people on God’s behalf, communicating divine revelation to the nation (Joshua 3:7–13). He promises a curse by the word of the Lord upon the one who would rebuild the city of Jericho (Joshua 6:26), enacted centuries later upon Hiel of Bethel (1 Kings 16:34).

Jesus functions as prophet to Israel in strikingly similar ways. He speaks to the nation on behalf of God, but also as God, and therefore as the one who perfectly reveals God’s true character and nature (John 1:18). Jesus’s ministry is sprinkled with predictive prophecy (John 2:19; Matthew 20:18–19; 24:2). His calming the sea and raising the dead firmly place Jesus within the tradition of the prophets of Israel.

5. VICTOR WHO SHARES THE INHERITANCE WITH HIS PEOPLE

Joshua’s division of the land of Canaan as inheritance for Israel may

seem an anticlimactic sequel to the conquest narratives. Yet for ancient Israelites, this was the happily ever after they had sought since before their slavery in Egypt. For the first time in over 400 years, the people of Israel were coming back into the land God had promised them as an eternal possession (Genesis 15:18; 17:8).

Jesus also brings His people into a great inheritance. We have forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God the Father, the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us, and the indwelling Holy Spirit. We have been adopted as God's children, becoming heirs of the covenantal promises to Israel (Galatians 3:29).

There is also an future aspect to our inheritance that will be fully revealed when Christ returns and the dead are raised. As Joshua gives his people rest in the land of promise, so Christ promises us an eternal home with Him in a glorious new creation (John 14:1-2; Revelation 21-22).

—Jonathan J. Routley, condensed

LESSONS FROM JOSHUA

"As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15).

This famous verse has appeared on wall plaques mounted in millions of homes. How did Joshua get to the point where this was his passionate and emphatic declaration? The answer is that he climbed to that height slowly and steadily. Joshua was faithful to the Lord from his youth. Our spiritual fathers didn't get there by chance, but by practice.

GOD'S DELIVERANCE AND PROVISION

The children of Israel were delivered from Egypt by God's power when Pharaoh and his army drowned in the Red Sea. As the Israelites started their journey to the Promised Land of Canaan, they began to com-

plain. Their needs for food and water were legitimate, but their complaints were not. They had just experienced God's power, but they quickly took their eyes off God and focused on their circumstances. Christians today do the same thing. We tend to magnify our problems and minimize our Lord! God, in His grace, had provided manna to eat and water to drink (Exodus 16:1-17:7). Israel continued their journey, having experienced both God's magnificent power and His bountiful provision. But a new problem arose—the Amalekites.

BATTLING THE FLESH

Joshua, whose name means "Jehovah is Savior," is first mentioned in connection with Moses, who instructed him to choose some men and go fight the Amalekites. As Joshua and his men were fighting them in the valley, Moses stood on the mountain with his arms raised. As long as Moses' hands were raised Israel prevailed; when Moses lowered his hands Amalek prevailed. In the end, Israel, led by Joshua, defeated the Amalekites (Exodus 17:13).

This is the first lesson to learn from Joshua's experiences as a young man: we can defeat Amalek, but we need help. Amalek reminds us of our fleshly nature. Although we Christians are born of the Spirit (John 3:6-8; 1 Peter 1:23), we still have to deal with the flesh (Romans 7:13-25; Galatians 5:16-26). Thankfully, we are not alone. Moses' intercession was a picture of Christ, our Great High Priest in Heaven, with His hands uplifted to help (Hebrews 4:14-16).

How are we to engage in our conflict with the flesh today? First, we must recognize that the flesh is always there (see Exodus 17:16), and it will rise and manifest itself in our thoughts. Second, we must judge it

by reading and applying God's word to our lives. Third, we should pray for the Lord's help. Our Great High Priest is able to give us victory.

LEARNING FROM A MENTOR

In Exodus 24, Moses is instructed to ascend Mount Sinai to receive the Law and the Ten Commandments. Verse 13 says, "Moses rose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God." As Moses' assistant, God blessed Joshua with solid spiritual training. Joshua undoubtedly learned invaluable lessons from being in the presence of Moses.

We Christians learn our best lessons from God in numerous ways: from Bible study, preaching, teaching, written ministry and prayer. Sometimes the Lord also gives us an older brother or sister who is our Moses. We should thank God for mentors and learn from them. And those of us who are older believers can work to build up the younger ones.

STAYING IN GOD'S PRESENCE

After Israel committed the grievous sin of worshiping the golden calf, Moses took his tent outside the camp of Israel and called it the tabernacle of meeting (Exodus 33:7). He set up a place away from the sin and failure, where the Lord could meet with him. Moses returned to the camp to deal with the people, but Joshua did "not depart from the tent" (Exodus 33:11).

Joshua wanted to be where the Lord spoke, where divine instructions were given. At the same time, he wanted to be away from sin and defilement. Joshua took up the practice of being always in the presence of the Lord. How can we do this? We need to develop our personal relationship with the Lord through reading His word, through meditation, and prayer. We need to obey Him and listen to His voice. We must filter ev-

erything through Him and His word. We need to gather with His people. There must be separation from evil.

Joshua's statement, "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD," was the summation of a life lived for God. May we follow and learn from his example! —Al Stuart, adapted

IT'S YOUR CHOICE

As Joshua was nearing the end of his life, he gathered the children of Israel together at Shechem. And there, from the lips of a man who was close to death, came an appeal that throughout the centuries has moved the hearts of many. Joshua said, "Choose this day whom you will serve" (Joshua 24:15).

This challenge, viewed in the light of the New Testament, suggests three outstanding lessons in regard to our salvation.

First, we must make a choice between God and the devil. To refuse Christ leaves us automatically on the devil's side. Jesus said, "Whoever is not with me is against me" (Matthew 12:30).

Second, this choice is a personal matter. Through faith in Jesus Christ, we can be born again and made a child of God. But we must do the believing for ourselves. "Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God" (John 3:18).

Third, there is an urgency in this charge. "Choose this day," not next month, not a week from today, not tomorrow, but this day.

Have you made that all-important choice? Have you trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior? If not, do so right now! The choice is yours.

—Richard DeHaan, *Our Daily Bread*