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Joshua 1

*“Be Strong and Courageous”*

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Joshua is the first book in the Bible that was named after a person. Joshua was Moses’ aide and assistant throughout the 40-year journey between Egypt and the Promised Land. Following Moses’ death, Joshua became his successor, God’s chosen leader to take the people of Israel into the Promised Land.

Joshua’s birth name was Hoshea (salvation), but in [Numbers 13](#), Moses changed it to Yehoshua, which means, the Lord is salvation. The English version of Yehoshua is Joshua, which is the same birth name for Jesus. So the question is, why isn’t Jesus called Joshua in the New Testament? The reason is that the New Testament was written in Greek, and the Greek transliteration of Yeshua in English is Jesus.

The book of Joshua is divided into three main sections: 1) chapters 1-5 entering the land; 2) chapters 6-12 conquering the land; 3) chapters 13-21 dividing and settling the land. Chapters 22-24 provide the epilogue to the book, and these chapters include the account of Joshua’s farewell address. The book of Joshua covers a period of about 25 years, and it ends with Joshua’s death at the age of 110, which means he was about 85 years old when he assumed his new role as the leader of Israel.

In this study, we will learn more about two very important and timeless instructions God gave that would strengthen Joshua in his personal walk with him: the comfort of God’s presence and the counsel of God’s Word.

### Historical Background

1. When Moses knew his time was near, he asked God to appoint a man to succeed him.

- a. **Numbers 27:18-23** - *“So the Lord said to Moses, ‘Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay your hand on him. Have him stand before Eleazar the priest and the entire assembly and commission him in their presence. Give him some of your authority so the whole Israelite community will obey him. He is to stand before Eleazar the priest, who will obtain decisions for him by inquiring of the Urim before the Lord. At his command he and the entire community of the Israelites will go out, and at his command they will come in.’ Moses did as the Lord commanded him. He took Joshua and had him stand before Eleazar the priest and the whole assembly. Then he laid his hands on him and commissioned him, as the Lord instructed through Moses.”*
2. Joshua’s leadership would only be as good as his relationship with God, which means he wouldn’t be able to lead in Moses’ strength or operate in Moses’ calling; he had to be the man God called for this specific time, place, and people.
    - a. There comes a time in every person’s life when he or she must realize that they can’t live off another person’s faith, another person’s relationship with God, or another person’s spiritual strength, any more than they could nourish their body while watching someone else eat or get in shape simply by hanging around people who work out at a gym.
    - b. It’s true that when we first come to faith in Christ we lean on Christians we admire in the faith, and when we learn by their example, we are strengthened by their influence.
    - c. If you have grown up in a Christian home, you cherish that family foundation, as well as the godly influence of a mom, a dad, or a grandparent, but no matter when you were saved, how young or how old you were, Christian upbringing or not, godly mentors or not, there will come a time when you have to own your faith for yourself.

### The Comfort Of God’s Presence

3. Three times in the first nine verses we read that God told Joshua to *“be strong and courageous.”*
4. *“I will be with you”* is the promise God links with his instructions to Joshua.<sup>1</sup>
5. **Joshua 1:9c** - *“Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.”*
6. **Joshua 1:5b** - *“As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.”*

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<sup>1</sup> **Joshua 1:5-9**

7. We can see why God would need to encourage most people to *“be strong and courageous,”* but Joshua is definitely not in the “most people” category!
  - a. The first time in the Bible we read of Joshua, he’s a warrior.
    - i. [Exodus 17](#) provides the account of Joshua leading the Israelites in battle against the Amalekites.
    - ii. [Exodus 17:8](#) says the Amalekites attacked the Israelites at Rephidim as they were passing through on their way to the Promised Land.
    - iii. [Exodus 17:9](#) – *“Moses said to Joshua, ‘Choose some of our men and go out to fight the Amalekites. Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hands.’ ”*
      1. Moses was on a hillside with his staff raised in the air.
      2. Aaron and Hur held Moses’ arms up while Joshua was leading the army in the valley below.
      3. [Exodus 17:13](#) – *“So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword.”*
  - b. The next time we see Joshua in the Bible is when he accompanied Moses part of the way up Mt. Sinai, when Moses met with God to receive the Ten Commandments.
    - i. When they came down off the mountain, Joshua said to Moses, *“There is the sound of war in the camp!”*
    - ii. Moses replied, *“It’s not the sound of victory or defeat, it’s the sound of singing.”*
  - c. We also read about Joshua in [Numbers 13:26-14:9](#), which is the account of the twelve spies who spied out the Promised Land.
    - i. The general consensus, except for Joshua and Caleb, was that there was no way they’d be able to occupy the land, because there were giants in the land, and *“[we] seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes and looked the same to them.”*
    - ii. Joshua and Caleb’s response was *very different!*
      1. In [Joshua 1:9](#), we read that Joshua tore his clothes and said, *“... Do not rebel against the Lord. And do not be afraid of the people of the land, because we will swallow them up. Their protection is gone, but the Lord is with us. Do not be afraid of them.”*
  - d. Scripture gives us a picture of Joshua the warrior and faith-filled believer in God, so why, of all people, would God need to tell him to *“be strong and courageous”*?
    - i. The reason is that we know that the most valiant warrior, the most “seasoned saint,” the most confident Christian can become worried, discouraged or afraid about things, because life is filled with its share of discouraging, challenging, and fearful times.
    - ii. For Joshua it was fighting the Canaanites and slaying the giants, and leading nearly three million people into an unfamiliar land.

- iii. For us, it might be fighting cancer or slaying giants like fear (the fear of failure), the fear of the future, the fear of bad news, or giants like lust, unforgiveness, jealousy, and greed.
- iv. We may be dealing with the discouragement of loneliness, or marital problems, business problems, problems with children, health problems, or the death of a loved one.
- v. What makes it particularly hard for us, as it was for Joshua, is when our support system, the person or people we've relied on aren't there any longer, whether they have died, moved or, in some cases, fallen away from the faith.
- vi. God's encouragement to Joshua was, "Moses is dead, but you, Joshua, be strong and courageous, and never forget that I'll never leave you nor forsake you!"
- vii. This is a promise from God to us as well, because the writer of the book of Hebrews quotes it as a timeless truth!
  - 1. [Hebrews 13:5b](#) - *"Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."*
- e. [Psalm 139:7-10](#) - *"Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast."*
- f. [John 14:16](#) - *"And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever..."*

#### The Counsel Of God's Word

- 8. [Joshua 1:7-8](#) - *"Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."*
- 9. There are two directives the Lord gives in relation to his Word: obey and meditate.
  - a. Obey the Law
    - i. The Hebrew for obey is shamar, which means, to keep, head, observe, and obey.
    - ii. God elaborates on the instruction to obey, by saying, *"do not turn from it to the left or the right."*
    - iii. God's Word is like a path; a single path of truth, and that we should never veer off that path.
      - 1. Rather than reading what God says to change our lives, we

can veer off the path when we selectively redefine what God says to suit our lives, and so become our own standard of truth.

2. There is a deeply disturbing trend among young adults in our culture, as well as in the church, today.
3. A survey conducted by the Barna Group, found these troubling things:<sup>2</sup>
  - a. Less than 1% of young adults in the U.S. have a biblical worldview.<sup>3</sup>
  - b. Less than ½ of 1% of Christians between the ages of 18 and 23 have a biblical worldview.
4. Pastor Gary encouraged the young people in the church to know that if there was ever a time when the words of God to Joshua - *“be strong and courageous”* - need to be heard it is now, because it will take strength and courage to believe and obey God’s truth when it is no longer popular.
5. Pastor Gary also challenged young people who identify with the ½ of 1% to answer the question all philosophers throughout the ages have asked: What is truth?
  - a. The answer to this question will determine whether your life is built on solid footing or whether you will forever be drifting on a sea of confusion.
  - b. What is truth?
    - i. Nearly 2,000 years ago Pontius Pilate asked this same question of Jesus.
      1. In [John 18:37-38](#), we read that Jesus said, *“Everyone on the side of truth listens to me,”* to which Pilate replied, *“What is truth?”*
    - ii. Is God truth or is it the collected ideas of a group of people who define and redefine truth?
    - iii. Is truth a studio audience for Oprah, Dr. Phil, or whomever, that comes to the definition of truth when enough people applaud and clap?
    - iv. Is truth what the majority says?
- iv. It’s amazing to see that God freely gives a reward to all who obey his Word and meditate on it day and night!
  1. [Joshua 1:7](#) - *“you [will] be successful wherever you go.”*
  2. [Joshua 1:8](#) - *“you will be prosperous and successful.”*

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.gotquestions.org/falling-away.html>

<sup>3</sup> The Barna Group defined a biblical worldview as the belief that: absolute moral truth exists; the Bible is completely inerrant; Satan is a real being, not symbolic; a person cannot earn their way into the kingdom of God through good works; Jesus Christ lived a sinless life on earth; and that God is the supreme Creator of the heavens and the earth and he reigns over the whole universe today.

3. Pastor Gary cautioned Christians to view prosperity and success from God's point of view, which is very different from an American/Western mindset.
  4. We need to be careful not to materialize this, because, since God's Word is true, it crosses cultures, nations, and people, and is just as relevant for us as it is for the poorest Believer in Nigeria or Honduras.
  5. God's favor and goodness are automatically attached to obeying his Word, and conversely, it hurts when we don't obey.
  6. God's truth is for our conviction, not our convenience.
  7. Truth, by definition, is exclusive, while at the same time being offensive if we are on the wrong side of it.
- b. Meditate on God's Word day and night
- i. To mediate means to ponder, to consider, and think about something.
  - ii. God's instruction is to contemplate on what he's said in his Word, not just move on to the next portion of Scripture so we can finish our Bible reading for the day.

### Conclusion

10. When we remember that God wants us to be strong and courageous, not failing to remember that he will never leave nor forsake us, we will have the comfort of his presence and the counsel of his Word.

### Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read [Joshua 1:1-9](#) to provide an overview for this study.
3. Provide an overview of Joshua to help the people in your group get a better sense of who the man God called to lead the nation of Israel. (See #7 above)
4. Spend time talking about the need to have a personal faith in the Lord. (See #2 above)
  - a. Allow the people in your group to share their stories about Christians they've admired, who had a positive influence in helping them grow in their faith.

5. Have there been times in your life when you were afraid or discouraged, yet you had the comfort of God's presence in your life?
6. Share examples of times when you were able to press on, because you knew the Lord was with you, taking comfort in his promise to "*never leave your nor forsake you.*"
7. What are some of the things/situations that cause you to be worried, afraid, or discouraged?
8. How has your support system of family and friends helped you in the difficult times of life?
9. Read and discuss [Psalm 139:7-10](#) and [John 14:16](#), and focus on the fact that we are never alone, even though it may feel that way sometimes.
10. Read and discuss [Joshua 1:7-8](#).
11. What would others say about how well you're doing when it comes to following the Word of God?
12. Do you find that the Lord is shaping your life by his Word, or is it the case that you are sometimes/often tempted to veer from the path of truth?
13. Spend time talking about the Barna Group survey Pastor Gary mentioned. (See #9a-3 above)
  - a. Be prepared to share an overview of the article found on [Gotquestions.org](#).
  - b. If you aren't 18 to 23, do you think your age group has a greater percentage of Christians who possess a biblical worldview?
14. Share examples of the ways God has made you successful and prosperous (not necessarily in a financial or materialistic way) because you've obeyed and meditated on his Word.
15. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: know that God wants them to be strong and courageous, and to never forget that he will not leave nor forsake them; take comfort in knowing they have the benefit and blessing of the counsel of his Word.

\* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).