

Title: Joshua - The making of a man of God - Joshua 1v1-5

Purpose: To look at this new book appreciating that it shows us a picture of the victorious Christian life that is meant to be the portion of every faithful believer and yet also that it shows us times of failure and into the bargain there are also sections where we see the people living at the level of complete mediocrity.

This morning we will see how God over time has made Joshua the man of God that He can use to achieve his great purposes.

INTRODUCTION

A new book - Joshua

It's great to be starting a new book this morning - the book of Joshua - and it is a very fresh book, a very new book in a couple of senses:

- **FIRSTLY** because it is the very first of the **PROPHETIC BOOKS** - in the Hebrew bible you have the first five books - which are the books of Moses and these are what they call the Law - the Torah. And then after that comes Joshua and this is the first of a new section that they call the Prophets - and although Joshua continues the history of God's people it is helpful to be reminded that this is a lot more than history - this is God speaking to His people, it is God preaching to His people and we are able to listen in and learn.
- **SECONDLY** - this book of Joshua is one that belongs to a special class of Bible books that are named after their chief character. This is the first one in the Bible to be named in this way.

Name of the book - Joshua

The book of Joshua is not alone in this - it belongs with other books named after their main characters - books such as:

- **Ruth**
- **1 OR 2 Samuel**
- **Ezra AND Nehemiah**
- **OR Job.**

Although this book does deal with various matters that aren't to do with Joshua per se - it is fair to say that we do get a lot of focussing on Joshua:

- his record,
- his character
- AND his achievements.

Successors often overlooked

The fact is that Joshua is a successor to a great man (in this case Moses - and you don't get much more major than that). And one of the things about people that follow after other great people is that usually nobody remembers them.

So we remember Presidents like **Abraham Lincoln** OR Prime Ministers like **Winston Churchill** - but rarely are we able to recall who came after them.

It is fair to say that:

- Very rarely does Joshua seem to get the full credit that he deserves as one of the sturdiest **men of faith that ever lived**.
- He has a truly excellent long term career exemplified by simply setting one foot in front of the other in quiet obedience regardless of the circumstances & regardless of the consequences.

And so, as **James Montgomery Boice** comments:

"Perhaps it is God's way of saying: '**Have you considered my servant Joshua?**' He was extraordinary. He was faithful and hardworking. He was wholly given to my service. **You should learn from his story.**"

There is, I think, quite a strong analogy from Joshua's time to ours - consider it this way:

- If Moses, that great servant of God, giving us the Law of God tends to obscure the one that comes after - that is Joshua who takes us in to the true victory and possession of the promised land.
- Q. Do we not also, in our day, find that RELIGION - (locating our salvation in following all the observances of the Law) - equally has the frequent end-result of obscuring the wonder of the **one Greater than Joshua - the One and only true Saviour Jesus** (which is just the NT form of the OT name Joshua - meaning "The Lord is Salvation")?

In all of the **NT** God wants to say, in similar fashion - **'Have you considered my servant, my Son, Jesus?'**

A priceless book

So we are coming to a very **priceless book** of Holy Scripture and this makes me very excited, it gives me a real sense of anticipation. This is the book which describes:

- Canaan - the land of promise
- Canaan - the target or the subject of God's covenant with Abraham made some 4-500 years earlier on (a covenant which he repeated to Isaac, to Jacob and reiterated to Moses at the burning bush)
- it describes the many successes of the Israelites by way of the mighty power of God with them
- here we have the people of God coming into their inheritance - a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey

So it's a wonderful book where there are lessons truly piled high that we can and should cream off for ourselves:

- what it means to be victorious
- what it looks like to live the victorious life on a day-by-day basis

Our structure

This morning we're going to cover just the first little bit of Chapter 1 and I have just two headings:

- #1 - **AN OLD CAREER** drawing from **Verses 1 & 2** and then
- #2 - **A NEW COMMISSION** covering **Verses 2 thru to 5**

So #1:

1] AN OLD CAREER - Verses 1-2

The book starts with the words:

Verses 1&2 "After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide: 'Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites.'"

There are a lot of new things in this book of Joshua - and one of the most obvious is the fact that we have a new leader.

Q. But how did he come to this place?

The fact is that:

- leaders don't simply come from nowhere!
- leaders don't simply grow up overnight!

The fact is instead that:

- God works in people's lives a long time in advance
- even now he is crafting & shaping, he is building character & leadership material into various ones of us

JOSHUA

Q. So what do we know of Joshua?

It might be that because Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy are so crammed full of Moses - that when it comes to Joshua you can hardly think of anything to say about him.

So let's piece together what we know of him, what has gone before this day here in Joshua 1 verse 1 & 2 where we see him getting "operationally commissioned".

1) Joshua as SLAVE

Joshua started out life with a different name and a very different status:

- the name of his father was **Nun** (in the Hebrew pronunciation it would be "Noon" - but we'll stick with the anglicised way of saying things) and **Nun** gave him the birth name **Hoshea** - which means simply "**Salvation**"
- from the tribal genealogy in 1 Chronicles 7 we know that he comes from the tribe of **Ephraim** and that he was the **firstborn son of Nun**.

Practically speaking - this means that when it came to the first Passover night, that 10th plague on all firstborns - Joshua's life was saved from the judgment of the destroying angel by the blood of the lamb sacrificed in his place

- he was born as **A SLAVE** under the tyrannical regime of the Egyptians (and so this may have been why his parents under the providential guiding of God gave him the name they did - "salvation")
- this birth name was modified by Moses (and we read this in Numbers 13) by adding the divine name to

Hoshea making it **Ye-hoshua** which in English versions becomes **Joshua - meaning "The LORD saves"**.

2) Joshua as **SOLDIER**

Well Joshua **didn't always stay as a slave**, no sooner do the people of Israel get out into the desert, about two months in to their travels, we see that he takes up the role as a **SOLDIER as a military commander**.

Exodus 17 gives us the account of that remarkable battle that is waged with the fearsome Amalekites and Moses goes up the mountain and prays with his hands of up while Joshua is down in the valley fighting. While Moses lifts his hands up in prayer then Joshua down in the valley prevails and when Moses grows tired and lets his hands droop down then Joshua and his men are getting beaten back.

We are not told how Joshua got his military abilities - it is quite possible that we gained training in Egypt within the ranks of the Egyptians - we do not know, it is likely that Moses himself had this kind of training within the house of Pharaoh and perhaps he was well-positioned to recognise military abilities when he saw it.

(**Josephus**, the Jewish historian of Jesus' day, mentions Moses' military accomplishments in Pharaoh's house - but we simply cannot know for sure).

3) Joshua as **SERVANT**

So he began as a **SLAVE**, went on as a **SOLDIER** and the next thing we learn of Joshua is that he becomes a **SERVANT**.

Exodus 24 Verse 12ff "The Lord said to Moses, 'Come up to me on the mountain and stay here, and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and commands I have written for their instruction.' Then Moses set out with **JOSHUA HIS AIDE**, and Moses went up on the mountain of God."

Joshua is the AIDE, the ASSISTANT, the MINISTER or SERVANT of Moses.

This is the pretty well universal route to greatness. You lean to make tea!

(Q. Isn't this what happens in companies with the new recruits - they are the ones assigned to go and make the teas - they are the ones assigned to file all the paperwork?)

Perhaps you feel that this sort of thing is beneath you - but doesn't Scripture affirm the pattern:

- that humility must precede greatness
- that loyalty (day-to-day faithfulness) must precede royalty

Rick Warren speaking on this subject - has this to say:

"You will never arrive at the state in life where you're too important to help with menial tasks. God will never exempt you from the mundane. It's a vital part of your character curriculum."

He goes on:

"Small tasks often show a big heart. Your **servant's heart** is revealed in little acts that others don't think of doing, as when Paul gathered brushwood for a fire to warm everyone after a shipwreck (Acts 28:3).

He was just as exhausted as everyone else, but he did what everyone needed. No task is beneath you **when you have a servant's heart**.

Great opportunities often disguise themselves in small tasks. The little things in life determine the big things. Don't look for great tasks to do for God. Just do the not-so-great stuff, and God will assign you whatever he wants you to do.

There will always be more people willing to do "great" things for God than there are people willing to do the little things. The race to be a leader is crowded, but the field is wide open for those **willing to be servants**.

Sometimes you **serve upward** to those in authority, and sometimes you **serve downward** to those in need. Either way, you develop a **servant's heart** when you're willing to do anything needed."

Joshua spent many many years simply alongside Moses sitting, as it were, at his feet and doing his bidding and learning by observing, learning by asking questions.

There was no question that he was very definitely: "**one in the shade**", and *not* "**one in the limelight**".

Exodus 33 - Tent of Meeting

Exodus 33 tells us of the Tent of Meeting - we read this:

(Verse 7) "Now Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the "tent of meeting."

It goes on:

(Verse 11) "The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend. Then Moses would return to the camp, but his **YOUNG AIDE Joshua son of Nun** did not leave the tent."

Q. So what else do we know about Joshua prior to this book that bears his name?

4) Joshua as SPY

Well one of the most SIGNAL EVENTS in all of the wilderness wanderings of the Israelites was the occasion of sending the 12 "tribal representatives" into Canaan to SPY OUT THE LAND.

The story is in Numbers 13&14.

They spent 40 days in the land and came back with the report and in essence 10 of the spies said:

"Well the land is truly amazing, the fruit is unbelievable - BUT - we can't do it, the people are too strong, the cities are too impregnable - we are not up to it!!"

The other two spies: **Caleb son of Jephunneh** and **Joshua son of Nun** came back giving a fully positive report saying that: "we can surely go in and defeat them".

What we learn is that:

- Joshua was not afraid to go against the flow, to be placed squarely into the category of a minority and be looked down upon
- Joshua was not afraid to lose the approval of others if it meant doing what was right and saying what was true even though hard, perhaps, for people to hear

We should notice by the way that it is **Caleb the older man** who gets more of the focus here.

Once again **Joshua** is happy to get the job done and not worry about his position, his reputation or personal fame.

Plaque in our bathroom

We have a plaque in our bathroom which simply says:

"God gives the best to those who leave the choice with Him!"

I think that Joshua understood that idea and was content simply to commit himself to the LORD and let Him raise him up if and when He should choose.

And so Joshua, as we have been tracing out his career up to this point, has been:

- A Slave
- A Soldier
- A Servant
- A Spy
- **and only now** becomes A Successor

5) Joshua as **SUCCESSOR**

As the book of Joshua opens we see him now being given OPERATIONALLY the reigns of leadership - this does not mean that this has not already been formalised ahead of time.

Moses, there in **Numbers 27** gets told that his time is coming to a close and that shortly he will climb a mountain to see the promised land and then he will be gathered to his fathers just like his brother Aaron and then we read of Moses' prayer to the LORD:

(Numbers 27 verse 16) "...appoint a man over this community to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so the LORD's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd."

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."

Q. Does Moses have a hard time accepting that he will not go across into the Promised Land?

You bet - he petitions God about it and eventually God says "Enough is enough - don't talk to me anymore about this" and He goes on:

Deuteronomy 3 verse 28 "...commission Joshua, and encourage and strengthen him, for he will lead this people across and will cause them to inherit the land that you will see."

6) Joshua as a man **IN THE SPIRIT**

If you wanted to give even one more aspect of Joshua's growth over the years you could add that he was a man IN THE SPIRIT - one on whom the Spirit of God rested.

Now I know that the NIV does not in that passage we just read put spirit with a capital letter and that they interpret it as meaning the spirit of leadership - but most other more literal translations feel that it is better translated with a capital S - Spirit.

For me - I would veer in that direction if only because this is typical of what we see also in the NT as a quality that is expected in one of God's leaders.

In Acts chapter 6 where we see the first set of "prototype deacons" being appointed - the requirements that the apostles laid down as selection criteria were:

Acts 6 verse 3 "Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be **full of the Spirit and wisdom...**"

Well that is a summary of Joshua's stage by stage sure and steady career path to where he is today here in Joshua chapter 1 verse 1.

I want now to turn to our second part - #2:

2] A NEW COMMISSION - Verses 2-5

There's three principles that are worth noticing about these Verses and they're all very simple things:

- **THE FIRST** - that they must **LET THE PAST BE THE PAST:**

Verse 2 starts "Moses my servant is dead..."

You know as Joshua stood there on the plains of Moab looking across into the Promised Land - it must have provoked some very mixed and strange feelings.

You see looking around him at the million plus people they had something very strange about them - you see there were no old people - no pensioners whatsoever - BAR TWO - himself and one still older CALEB.

Not only that he knew that out of all these people standing here only himself and CALEB could say that they had a strong sense of DEJA VU. You see only these two had been here before 40 years or so earlier on.

Everyone else had perished due to unbelief and unwillingness to move forward as God had directed them.

Now Joshua could have been filled with a sense of DEEP REGRET about the past and maybe some of us here are dominated by the past, but we shouldn't be.

DMLJ speaks about REGRET in his book on Spiritual Depression its causes and cure. (p82-83).

We have to move on and Jesus too says the same thing that those who "look back are not fit for the Kingdom of heaven" (Luke 9 verse 62).

We are to be like the Apostle Paul who says in [Philippians 3 verse 13](#) that he "one thing I do: Forgetting what

is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize..."

So then:

- **THE SECOND** principle is- that they must **PRESS ON INTO THE FUTURE**:

Let me read **Verses 2&3**: "Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them -- to the Israelites. I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses."

The verb is **verses 2 and 3** is literally, **"I have given..."**. It is a way in Hebrew of saying something which has not yet happened but is so certain to happen that you say it already has happened.

God's power is such that what He promises is a reality before it ever happens. It is what the Bible calls **hope** - it is that sure and certain thing.

Romans 5 verses 1-5 opens like this and gives us a good example of this type of **hope** we have:

"Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, **hope**. And **hope** does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us."

You see the land of promise was exactly that a land that was subject to a covenant promise that God had earlier made the Patriarchs. What this meant was that the land was already **OWNED** by the people of God, just that it was not yet **OCCUPIED** by the people of God.

See what **Verse 5** says: **"As I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will never leave you or forsake you."**

Although we may change, although leaders may change, the reality is that God does not change - and God's programme must go on.

The reality is that no-one - not even a Moses is indispensable.

Q. It does give us "cause for pause" - don't you think?

We often think that we are, in some way, in some sphere, indispensable - but God can raise up new people, God can go around us to get things done.

And here the promise of entering the land is renewed and Joshua and the new generation are the ones who are now faced with this opportunity.

- **THE THIRD** - that **THE PRESENT INVOLVES OBEDIENCE**:

Perhaps there are opportunities all around you that God would have you step up for and step into.

Maybe you have been standing back from them because of fear, because you feel you are small or are in a

minority. Well learn a lesson from Joshua and move on in - don't get so stuck in the present that there is no future!!

Verse 3 reads "I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses."

Notice it is "every place where you set your foot" which means you've got to be out there - taking those day-by-day steps of obedience exactly as they come.

It's a day at a time, one challenge at a time, one area of your life at a time.

BUT HERE'S THE THING - God always provides for that which he commands - He tells us go out and do this and do that - and then right alongside that we are told what we see in:

Verse 5 "...so I will be with you. I will never leave you nor forsake you."

and we get the same in Verse 9 "...the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go..."

Isn't it the same in the Great Commission - the Lord Jesus tells us to "Go and make disciples etc. etc." and right alongside that He says that He will be with us to the very end of the age.

CONCLUSION

Joshua then - a book that deeply challenges us to STEP UP!

For us to ask ourselves the question:

- Q. Am I usable by God?
- Q. Am I knowing, am I living anything close to a victorious life?

Well if you are not yet inspired by what you have seen of God's working in Joshua's life - perhaps as the weeks go on you will be better placed to answer these questions and better able to be a lot more on the victorious end of the scale - to God's greater glory and to our greater joy in Him!

Let's pray ... AMEN