

Victorious Rest

God's promises, purpose, power, and presence give us assurance for our victorious rest.



GOD'S STORY
THE TRANSFORMATION FOR ADULT LIFEGROUPS

Joshua 1:1-9; 5:13-15

May 10, 2020

(Joshua 1:1-9) ¹After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide: ²"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. ³I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. ⁴Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates—all the Hittite country—to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. ⁵No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. ⁶Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them. ⁷"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. ⁸Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; 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. ⁹Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."

(Joshua 5:13-15) ¹³Now when Joshua was near Jericho, he looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword in his hand. Joshua went up to him and asked, "Are you for us or for our enemies?" ¹⁴"Neither," he replied, "but as commander of the army of the LORD I have now come." Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence, and asked him, "What message does my Lord have for his servant?" ¹⁵The commander of the LORD's army replied, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy." And Joshua did so.

COMMUNITY – CONNECTING WITH ONE ANOTHER

- **When have you felt the most overwhelmed or fearful?**
- **How did feeling this way affect your ability to focus and perform?**
- **How did (or should have) your faith in God speak to the situation and your feeling overwhelmed?**

Moses had died, and God has raised up his aide, Joshua, as his successor. Joshua's job description is clear: he must lead the Israelites into the land God had promised their ancestors. But this task would not be easy. But God reassures Joshua that He will be with him and will never forsake him. God promises that He will ultimately give the Israelites victory under the leadership of Joshua, whose name literally means, "the LORD gives victory." There will, in fact, be rest for the people of God on the other side of their battles – a victorious rest promised and ensured by God himself.

CONTENT – EXPLORING GOD'S STORY

Have a volunteer read Joshua 1:1-9

The first sentence of the Book of Joshua connects what is about to happen with what happened in the Pentateuch (the Books of Moses). Moses was not allowed to lead the Israelites into the promised land after struggling with them in the wilderness for 40 years. He died and now the responsibility of leading the conquest of Canaan falls on his protégé Joshua.

- **Why would Joshua's succession of Moses require humility on his part as well as courage? What is the relationship between humility and courage? Can we have one without the other?**
- **What specific promises in verses 2-5 does God make to Joshua that should give him courage to lead the people and take the land? Why should Joshua have confidence in the LORD to come through on these promises?**
- **How do you personally use God's promises to cultivate courage in yourself?**

Have a volunteer read Joshua 1:6-8

- In verse 6, God transitions from speaking to Joshua about promises for the future to His present purposes for him. Why is it important for us to never separate what God promises to do in the future from what He is calling us to do right now?
- According to verses 7-8, where was Joshua to turn to find God's purposes for us? Why is it important that we discern God's purposes for our lives from what He has revealed and commanded in Scripture (i.e., the Book of the Law)? How does this require faith?
- What type of success and prosperity is verse 8 talking about? How does meditating on and obeying God's Word achieve a different kind of success than how the world defines success?

Have a volunteer read Joshua 1:9

- Three times now God has said to Joshua, "Be strong and courageous." Why is that so important to Joshua? What words do you feel like God has to say to you over and over?
- According to verse 9, why should Joshua not be fearful? Why is God's presence our only true hope and security?
- Where else in Scripture do we see similar promises concerning God's presence?

God promises to be with Moses (Ex. 3:12), His people going into exile (Isa. 43:1-7), and the church as she lives on mission making disciples (Matt. 28:18-20).

Have a volunteer read Joshua 5:13-15

Joshua was by Jericho because the conquest of Jericho would soon occur, a battle that must have felt daunting and nearly impossible to Joshua. Joshua may have ventured near Jericho to scout the situation and to inspect the fortifications. When Joshua lifted up his eyes, he saw a man. This man was standing in front of Joshua with his sword drawn in his hand. Joshua was in enemy territory preparing for an invasion. The drawn sword signaled potential danger. Subsequent events revealed to Joshua that this was no ordinary man.

- When Joshua asked whose side this man was on (v. 14), the commander of the LORD's army said "Neither," meaning it was for God's cause alone that he came. What does this remind us about our relationship with God and our purpose in this life?

Many have identified this captain of the host of the LORD with the angel of the Lord, who in some contexts cannot be distinguished from the Lord Himself. If this is the case, the Lord was appearing to Joshua during a critical time in his life to assure him that He would be with him, just as He had promised (Josh. 1:5; 3:7). The statement, "I have now come as commander of the LORD's army," let Joshua know that God was in control, and Joshua should make sure he was on God's side, not the other way around.

- The name "Jesus" is the Greek form of the Hebrew name "Joshua." Joshua was the man God raised up to lead his people to victorious rest in the Old Testament? How is Joshua a type of foreshadowing of the coming Jesus?

The book of Joshua tells the story of the conquest of Canaan into the Promised Land, where the people of God can enjoy a victorious rest. But God had even greater things planned for His people. In the future, He would deliver them, guide them, and lead them to victory over sin and its consequences through His own Son, the new and better Joshua. Unlike Joshua, Jesus is both fighting alongside His people *and* is Himself the God who brings them ultimate victory.

Just as Joshua encouraged the Israelites in their battles to keep their eyes focused on the source of their victory and not to rely on anyone or anything else, Jesus does the same for us. He reminds us that our peace, our rest, our victory comes from Him alone.

COMMISSION – ENGAGING IN GOD’S STORY

- Throughout Scripture God assures us of His presence and power at work in our lives. In what situation do you need to be reminded of God’s presence this week?
- Where do you look for strength? What other things might you be relying on instead of God? How do you keep your focus on the only One who can bring about victory for you?
- What counts as victory? Is the rest you seek the same as that of those who don’t know God? How do you know when you have the rest that God intends for you?

Looking at the book of Joshua through the lens of Christ enables us to see the contours of our own Christian experience. We face many and often imposing obstacles on the way to victorious rest. Along the way we are tempted to rely on other people or things to bring us a rest that can only come from God – and sometimes we give into those temptations. But if we keep our eyes focused on Jesus, then the meaning of His name will be true for us as well. Because “the LORD gives victory,” our relationship with Jesus means that we too will know and experience victorious rest. We will know it fully in the future when we reign with Christ (2 Timothy 2:12; Revelation 20:6), and we will know it even now when we look for it in our Almighty God and Savior.

PRAYER: Close in prayer asking God to increase the group’s faith in His ability to fulfill His promises and to use them in doing so. Pray that God’s presence would become more real to them than their greatest fears.

CONTINUE TO JOURNEY THROUGH GOD’S STORY

Bible Reading Plan:

DAY 1 – Joshua 5:10-15, 6
 DAY 2 – Joshua 7-8
 DAY 3 – Joshua 23-24
 DAY 4 – Judges 2-3
 DAY 5 – Judges 4

KEY VERSE: Joshua 24:15

H.E.A.R. Method:

Highlight a verse or two.
 Explain what the text means.
 Apply the verse to your life.
 Respond to God.

Our team has put together Bible study resources to encourage and inspire you as you engage in God’s Story. Visit chetscreek.com/gods-story for videos, study guides, and more.

OUR VISION

To be a church
 for the unchurched,
 here and around the world.

ADULT LIFEGROUPS

Gospel-centered communities that aim to KNOW
 GOD together and BE CHANGED by Him in a
 way that will CHANGE THE WORLD.

Joshua 1:1-9

1:1. The death of Moses created a leadership vacuum. Joshua son of Nun, who had served Moses, identifies Joshua as the one who had been with Moses since Exodus 17. That he “served Moses” (cp. Ex 24:13) uses a different term than “Lord’s servant.”

1:2. God commanded Joshua to prepare the people to cross over the Jordan. The fact that all the people were involved emphasizes the importance of unity among the people of God. God emphasized that the land was something He was giving the Israelites; it was God’s grace, not the efforts of the Israelites, that provided the land.

1:3. Repeating the emphasis on the land as God’s gift, it now included every place where the sole of your foot treads. Although the “promised land” is normally understood as something that God promised Abram, Isaac, and Jacob (Gen. 12:1-3), here God attached the promise to Moses.

1:5. The reference to as long as you live looks to the end of Joshua’s life, concluding this “Table of Contents” in verses 2-5. The promise I will not leave you anticipates the plea of Gibeon in 10:6, “Don’t abandon your servants,” using the same expression. Likewise, the verb forsake occurs again in Joshua, in Israel’s promise of loyalty to God (“abandon” in 24:16,20). This verse forms a hinge, concluding the previous sections of promises and introducing the next section of responsibilities. God’s promise of His presence occurs again in 1:9 and thus provides an “envelope” to 1:6-9. All the responsibilities of these verses depend on God’s presence that guarantees the mission’s success, just as Christ’s presence enables His disciples to achieve their mission (Mat. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,20; Acts 1:8).

1:6. God’s command, “Be strong and courageous,” already spoken by Moses to Israel, appears three times here. The expression is used before great undertakings, like David’s charge to Solomon to build the temple, King Hezekiah’s encouragement to his subjects to withstand the enemy’s siege (2 Chron. 32:7), and Joshua’s own charge to Israel to fight (Josh. 10:25).

1:7. The word success (Hb sakal; cp. “succeed” in v. 8) is found frequently in the Wisdom literature to describe one’s mastery of the world and insight into its challenges (“wise” in Prov. 1:3). The whole instruction (Hb torah) describes God’s revelation in the form of the previous books of the law of Moses.

1:8-9. Two more references to the instruction affirm the key importance of God’s revelation. Study and learning of it are to form so much a part of one’s life that the words are fully obeyed as in Deuteronomy 6:6-9. The “frame” of God’s promised presence in Joshua 1:5,9 indicates that Joshua’s success will come because God is with him, enabling him to read and observe God’s word (Eph. 2:8-10).

Joshua 5:13-15

5:13. By subject matter and syntax, a new episode begins here. The stage is set with Joshua near Jericho. He was surprised by seeing a man standing before him “with a drawn sword in his hand.” This was a threatening sight, and Joshua’s question about the man’s loyalties should not surprise us. The exact language here—“with a drawn sword in his hand”—is found again only twice in the Old Testament, referring to the angel of the Lord: (1) in Num 22:23, 31, where the angel of the Lord stood before Balaam, barring his way, and (2) in 1 Chr 21:16, where the angel of the Lord stood before David, threatening Israel because of David’s sin. Joshua apparently did not initially recognize the man as a divine messenger. A literal translation of his acts of perception is “and he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, a man was standing opposite him.” The word “behold” here indicates a change in perspective, from the narrator’s all-knowing perspective to Joshua’s more limited perspective, and it captures some of his surprise at seeing this threatening sight. We might paraphrase here by saying, “He looked, and what do you know! A man was standing opposite him.” Joshua’s question of this man reflects a natural human concern with the immediate: he was concerned with the battles ahead and whether or not he could count on this man.

5:14. Scholars disagree about whether this figure was an angel of the LORD or God Himself. Either way, Joshua recognized this man's authority, and he prostrated himself on the ground and "worshiped" him. In either case, however, Joshua clearly knew that he was in the presence of an extraordinary superior being because he did bow down, and he did not pursue his question about the man's loyalties any further. Rather, he humbly asked, "What message does my [lord] have for his servant?" In this response, Joshua displayed three attitudes: (1) a humble, expectant, obedient attitude, indicated by the question itself; (2) a recognition of the man's superior (and God-sent) position, indicated by the term "my lord"; and (3) a recognition of his own inferior position and a readiness to serve, indicated by his use of the term "his servant" to refer to himself.

5:15. Even though the man refused to answer Joshua's question, it is clear that he would be "for" Israel, not "against" it. Why, then, did he not speak more forthrightly with Joshua and tell him that he was indeed for Israel? It appears to have been to teach Joshua a lesson about priorities. God had already promised Joshua that he would be with him just as he was with Moses (1:5), so Joshua needed not worry. The lessons Joshua needed here were to be able to recognize when he was in God's presence and when to trust in him. The man's instructions to Joshua about removing his sandals because he was standing on holy ground obviously recalled God's words to Moses at the burning bush (Exod 3:5). In yet another way, Joshua was now being affirmed as Moses' successor and God's presence was being promised to him.