

A Good Example

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- [0 : 00] Joshua 1, and we'll read the whole chapter tonight. Chapter 1. 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. I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses.
- Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, from the great river, the Euphrates, all the Hittite country to the great sea on the west. No one will be able to stand up 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. Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them.
- Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you. And do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go.
- [1 : 13] 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.
- Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified. Do not be discouraged. For the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.
- So Joshua ordered the officers of the people, Go through the camp and tell the people, Get your supplies ready. Three days from now you will cross the Jordan here to go in and take possession of the land the Lord your God is giving you for your own.
- But to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh, Joshua said, Remember the command that Moses, the servant of the Lord, gave you. The Lord your God is giving you rest and has granted you this land.
- Your wives, your children, and your livestock may stay in the land that Moses gave you east of the Jordan. But all your fighting men, fully armed, must cross over ahead of your brothers.
- [2 : 21] You are to help your brothers until the Lord gives them rest, as he has done for you, and until they too have taken possession of the land that the Lord your God is giving them.
- After that, you may go back and occupy your own land, which Moses, the servant of the Lord, gave you east of the Jordan, toward the sunrise. Then they answered Joshua, Whatever you have commanded us, we will do.
- And wherever you send us, we will go. Just as we fully obeyed Moses, so we will obey you. Only may the Lord your God be with you as he was with Moses.
- Whoever rebels against your word and does not obey your words, whatever you may command them, will be put to death. Only be strong and courageous. Pastor Jason, come and preach.

We do want to look at Joshua 1 again. And we have some things to finish up in this introductory chapter before we move into the main part of the story that is Joshua, the taking of the land and the giving of the land.

[3 : 35] And so this introductory chapter, we have some lessons that we can't learn anywhere else but here. And so we do want to learn the lessons that are in this chapter. The Old Testament is full of examples not to follow.

Full of examples that you don't want to follow. I was just reading Hebrews 3 in my devotions and it says there, Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts like you did in the rebellion.

And it's talking about these people's parents. They hardened their hearts. When God said, go into the land, they said no.

And then they began to rebel against Moses and Aaron and God himself. The people had hardened their hearts. And Hebrews says, look at that.

See what they did. And see to it, brothers, that none of you have a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

[4 : 38] So the author of the Hebrews wants us to learn a lesson from these folks' parents. Don't be like them. So there's an example not to follow.

See what they did. Don't do that. And that's how we teach as parents, isn't that? Isn't that how we do it a lot of times? We sit down our children and we say, now look at what is happening there.

Don't do that. I don't know if I'm morbid or I don't know what I am, I guess. But I like to sit my kids down and we watch YouTube videos sometimes where there's these young adults just out of college.

And they are beside themselves. They're saying, I'm \$100,000 in debt. And I work at Starbucks. And I can't make ends meet.

And they show their bills and their bills are just getting bigger. And I sit my girls down especially and I say, look at these people.

[5 : 47] Don't do that. Don't be like that. Be smart. So there's examples to not follow. And then there are examples to follow.

We had one young lady come over to our house. And as we were talking, it came out that she had graduated from college. And she graduated debt-free, \$20,000 in the bank.

And we said to our girls, now look at that. That's what you want to do. Be smart. A good example. And a good example is what we have here in Joshua 1.

And it's really very refreshing to see a story in the Old Testament, a chapter in the Old Testament, where this is what we want to be like.

You see people here facing a huge challenge. They're right beside a raging, flooded Jordan River.

[6 : 52] And on the other side of that river, there are cities and giants and kings who are all opposing them. And yet, they all together trust God and obey Him and do what He says.

They get right to it. They're all in it together. One for all. All for one. And that's why they conquer and overcome when their parents didn't.

It was the same God, same promises, same land, same city, same giants, same kings. And yet, but by faith, they obeyed and won.

And they are an example to us. Not only is Joshua an example to us as a soldier and a servant and sold out and spirit filled.

The people he's leading show us how we too are to live the Christian life. They had to overcome. There were obstacles and opposition forces to overcome.

[8 : 00] Seven times in Revelation 2 and 3, Jesus says to the churches, to those who overcome, to those who conquer. So how did they do it?

What can they teach us? What example do we want to take from them and learn from them? Well, I have three lessons to tonight. Three lessons from the rest of Joshua 1.

And the first one is, is stick close to the word of God. Stick close to the word of God. Why were they so successful and so prosperous in what they did?

Well, they stuck close to the word of God. You see what God says to Joshua and through Joshua to the people in verse 7.

God's speaking to Joshua here. He says, be strong and very courageous. We looked at that last week. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you.

[8 : 59] Do not turn to the right or to the left that you may be successful wherever you go. And let's just pause there. When God is speaking about success in Joshua, he's not talking about paychecks and blessings and airplanes and BMWs and things like that.

He is talking about accomplishing the purpose that God gave them. The task to which God gave them of taking the land, conquering that land.

So you'll 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. And that's our first lesson. That's the first way that we want to follow their example. And that is when God says to them, stick close to this word.

Stick close to my word, what I've said. The Christian life, the life of courageous, strong faith in action runs on the tracks of obedience and faith to God's word.

[10 : 11] It runs on those tracks, those twin tracks of obedience and faith to God's word. And so God says to Joshua, be a person of this book.

Be a person of this book. Be careful to obey it. Be careful to obey it. I've rather just said the word is over us. We put ourselves underneath it.

And that's what God says to Joshua. Put this word over your heart. Set it over you. Put it in charge of your life. Obey it. So what it says, do.

Not argue about or think about or ponder or if it agrees with you. There's a big difference between agreement and obedience sometimes.

And God is saying, obey. He says, be careful to do it. If you take care of something, if you're careful about doing something, you plan it, you think it, you make situations so that you do it.

[11 : 23] You make it a priority. You put it above other things. So Tom Brady, the quarterback for the New England Patriots, is well known for being very careful and taking care of himself.

Because he wants to be successful and prosperous as a quarterback for as long as he possibly can. And so while others might be out partying or doing whatever they're doing, he's often in bed by 8 o'clock.

A grown man. Kids, in bed by 8 o'clock. Why? Because he wants to play quarterback successfully for as long as possible.

And so he's careful to do what it takes to do. So he just doesn't eat anything. He eats the best kinds of food. He doesn't get sloppy because he's always thinking and planning about doing what it takes to be a successful quarterback.

And so God says to Joshua, be careful to obey this law that I gave Moses. Stick close to this word. And that truth comes over into our lives.

[12 : 36] Do we want to be successful in our Christian life? Then we have to stick close to the word of God. Brothers and sisters, we are people of this book.

We have submitted ourselves to it. And in some ways, the Christian life is all about our relationship with God's word.

And that's not something that's just new or modern or novel or anything like that. It goes all the way back to Adam and Eve in the garden. Adam and Eve's relationship with God was going to be determined by what they did with what he told them to do.

That's just the way it is. In doing what he says, you obey God. In believing what his word says, you believe him.

Relationship with God is not something that is disconnected. Disconnected from God's word. We can't have a high view of God and a so-so view of his of the Bible, of his word.

[13 : 44] A lot of people say they have a high view of God, but then they ignore what he says or they feel like they can disagree with whatever they don't like. And so if you ignore what someone says, you ignore him.

You ignore her. There's no other way around it. So we are people of this book. We talk about this book.

Don't let this word depart from your mouth. So where is your Bible? I mean, a lot of you have them on your laps right now.

Where is your Bible the rest of the week? In your car? On your shelf? By your chair? In your bed? Well, wherever it is, it should be in your mouth.

It should be on your tongue. I think it was Spurgeon who said that John Bunyan, if you stuck him, he would bleed bibbling. He would bleed the Bible. When he talked, he would talk without even thinking about the Bible.

[14 : 53] And so don't let this word depart from your mouth. And he's talking especially to Joshua, to leaders there. And so our words as leaders, as pastors, or as fathers, or as mothers over children, or however our leadership looks like, leaders need to have this word in their mouths.

So when Christian leaders speak, it should be the word of God. As pastors especially, where it does not speak, they should be silent.

And where it does speak, they should boldly say whatever it says. And so no man, no matter how great, no pastor or preacher, no matter how great, is above God's word.

Joshua wasn't. And that certainly means Pastor John and I aren't. And then what about speaking to one another?

What comes out? Pastor John and I were just talking the last elder meeting. When you look through those back windows and you see all these people, all you talking to each other.

[16 : 05] That's the ministry of the body. It's love. It's so good. When you're in that context, what comes out? Is it the word of God?

Let this word be on your mouth. Don't let it depart. Don't let it escape and go somewhere else. Keep it there. If it is not God's word that comes out when you speak, then it very well could be because you're not doing what God says next to Joshua, which is meditate on it day and night.

So you might be careful to obey it. So where is your Bible? In your car, on your shelf, by your bed, by your chair. Well, wherever it is, it needs to be in your head, in your mind.

God says, obey this word, speak this word, think this word. Oh, how I love your law. I meditate on it.

All the day. Meditation. A.W. Pink says there is no true progress and vital. That is living. That is alive and practical godliness without meditation.

[17 : 17] Without it. Meditation is not something optional, but it is obligatory. For it is something which God has commanded us to attend to.

It's not optional. It is obligatory. It is something we must do. Why? Why do I have to do it? Because God commanded us to do it. Paul says, think about these things.

Psalms 1 is about the blessed man. Who is that blessed man? Well, on your law, he meditates. Day and night.

Now, Joshua was a busy leader. We saw a couple weeks ago, he's a soldier. That's the first way he's introduced. He's a man of action. He's a general. He's a war leader.

He's a servant. He has a lot to do. And if anyone has an excuse of being too busy or can say to himself, I'm not that kind of person.

[18 : 21] I'm an active guy. I'm not a thinker. I'm not a ponderer. I'm a doer. I'll leave that to the pastors. I'll leave that for others. Well, if anyone could say that, that would have been Joshua.

He's a man of action. He's not a philosopher sitting on a mountain thinking about things all day. He has things to do. He's a doer, a soldier, administrator.

But God says day and night, you need to find ways to meditate on this law. And Joshua did. How do we know that he did it?

Well, we're going to see as the book of Joshua unfolds that he's successful. He's prosperous. And when he leads, he leads with God's word.

So if you say I'm too busy, I'm too busy to pray. It's sort of like saying that meditation is sort of like saying I'm too busy to pray.

[19 : 24] I'm too busy to meditate. And really, shouldn't it be? No, I am so busy. So I need to pray. I am so busy.

So I do need to be thinking about God's word. If anyone needs to be thinking and praying over God's word, it is the person who is doing a lot. Because in all of that doing, all of that action, what is going to be coming out of you?

Things are going to be coming out of your mouth. Your hands are going to be doing things. Action is going to be coming out of you. And so is it going to be God's word coming out of you?

Or the whole mess of your half thoughts, selfish thoughts, ideas? If you want to be successful and prosperous, again, we're talking about Psalm 1, successful and prosperous.

The man blessed by God who has divine wind in his sail, so to speak. Then God says, stick close to this word. Stick close to this word.

[20 : 30] Where is it? It should be in your mouth. It should be in your mind. You should be obeying it. And that's what we see Joshua doing. The only hiccups in the whole book of Joshua happen when they don't stick close to the word.

Achan doesn't do what God says, and it sets the community back. They don't consult with God. And the Gibeonites deceive them.

But other than that, what we see in Joshua is success and blessing. And it's because they stuck close to what God said. And so, just applications.

Reminders. These aren't going to be anything new. But just things that need to be said. And just three things, very brief. One is read your Bible every day.

Is that a habit? Meditate on it day and night. It's a daily thing. Number two, take enough time or a small enough bite to think about it.

[21 : 36] If your choice is between reading more or meditating more, you want to meditate more. They're not always, that can be a false dichotomy. But I'm saying, if the choice is between those two, meditate more.

Reading is good. Meditation is better. A small bite fully chewed up is better than winning the hot dog eating contest. When you have 52 hot dogs.

A small bite is better. Number three, find a way to make it day and night. A memory card in your pocket. Verses that you've written down in your pocket.

When I was working, I had a little Gideon Bible that went always in my back pocket. And so, any spare moment, any quiet moment, any desperate moment that I needed, that I could grab a few moments with a song or with Paul, kept me sane, kept me hoping, kept me trusting, gave me divine air from heaven in the world that I was living in.

Night and day. We have to keep moving on. That's our first lesson. The other two are much shorter. The second lesson is this. The time to obey is right now.

[22 : 58] The time to obey is right now. So, Joshua has this commission. Get ready to cross the Jordan. You're going to cross the Jordan. You're going to take this land. It's time to go in.

Joshua has this commission. And verse 10 says, So Joshua, or then Joshua, ordered the officers of the people, go throughout the camp, tell the people, get your supplies ready.

Three days from now, we are crossing the Jordan. So we have a million people. And we are moving out in three days. And so when does Joshua obey?

He obeys right now. He goes from hearing God to speaking to the people. There's no delay. The people start getting ready right now.

It's been a long time coming. Years and years. Forty years now. But now it's here. The day is dawn. The time has come. The command has gone out.

[23 : 58] And Joshua doesn't wait. He doesn't procrastinate. He doesn't give it a week or two. He tells the people, We're leaving in three days. Get your things ready. Three days.

Not we'll think about crossing the river. Not we'll start thinking about heading that way. Not we'll put everything in order and make sure everything is just right. And when we've had a good long time to look at the situation. And then if we've decided that the time is right, then we'll go start heading that way.

No. Three days from now, we are crossing that river. It's been a long time coming. But there is now a divine urgency about obeying.

And that's our second lesson. The time to begin to obey God and His word is right now. God's word is not like a New Year's resolution.

You know how that is. It's like December 23rd comes along and you're like, I really need to start eating better and exercising. But when am I going to start doing that?

[24 : 59] Not now. In eight or nine days we'll do that. Now there might be something about starting a new year and getting a new start. I mean, there's not a big deal if you don't exercise for eight days.

It's not a sin. But waiting a few days to start obeying God is not delaying obedience. It's just disobedience.

Delayed obedience is disobedience. And that's why we teach our children, this is what it looks like to obey. You do what mom or dad says right away, all the way, with a happy heart.

Right away. This was a memory verse not too long ago, at the beginning of March. Psalm 119:60. I will hasten and not delay to obey your commands.

Now the Bible talks about being hasty. And sometimes it says it's not good to be hasty and miss the way. You don't want to do that.

[26 : 04] Zeal without knowledge is not good. But brothers and sisters, God's command is not something that we should or we can say, let's not be too hasty about that.

Let's make sure we're doing that right. Let's make sure. No, I will hasten and not delay. Colossians 3:23, whatever you do, work at it with all of your heart.

When you work at something with all of your heart, you do it as soon as it comes to you. Right away. And that's the example that we have of Joshua and the leaders and the people.

They obey right away. So children, when should you obey your parents? Right away. Right now. And Spurgeon said this.

We are too often in a hurry to sin. Oh, for a heart that was in a hurry to obey. That's a good prayer, isn't it?

[27 : 01] Lord, I find that I am really quick to go and sin. Give me a heart that's in a hurry to obey. So dear believers, how is it going with you?

Maybe this is a point where you need to say, what is God putting his finger on here? Right now, can you think of something where the spirit of God is saying, this is what I'm talking about.

You know, you should be doing this, but you're not. I don't know what it is for you. Maybe it's crystal clear. You say, I've been meaning to, but I need to get around to it.

Let me just ask you, what will you get for delaying obedience? What will you get for delayed obedience?

And you say, it's hard. And yeah, it is hard. If it was easy, you would probably be doing it right away. Or it's frightening.

[28 : 10] Well, crossing a flooded Jordan into enemy territory was going to be hard. And it was going to be frightening. But God says, I am with you. And that's why we can work through those hard, frightening things and do what he calls us to do.

He's with you. And so what are you going to get for delaying? A guilty conscience? A cloud? Like, like there was this morning where it's just not, there's no sun in the sky at all.

Just a cloud. Between you and God. That weight that says you're not doing what you should be doing. What are you going to get for delaying?

A limping heart. You know what I'm talking about. The limping heart. That guilty conscience. That drain on your spiritual life and joy.

That's what you'll get. But what will prompt obedience bring? What has it brought you in the past? It's brought you joy. It's brought you God's smile. Prompt obedience is the way to God's smile.

[29 : 13] Prompt obedience is the way to happiness and peace and spiritual prosperity. And so the time to begin to obey is right now. It's right now. That's the second lesson that these folks teach us.

And now here's the third lesson. We all need each other. We all need each other in this. That's what you see in verses 12 through 18. It's the whole community working together.

Helping each other to go up and to take the land. Now, I don't want to go into huge detail because it's pretty self-explanatory. But two and a half tribes had taken their inheritance, their land, on the eastern side of the Jordan River.

They had already taken their land. It was good. They wanted it. There was a lot of space. They asked Moses for it. And Moses said, you can have this land. But only if you go up with your brothers when it comes to take their land.

You just can't stay here. Your fighting men have to go. And they said they would. But now Joshua comes back to them. Moses is dead.

[30 : 26] Their promise was to Moses. But Joshua comes back to them. And reminds them of their commitment to help their brothers. Just because you've entered in doesn't mean that you can put down your swords.

Your brothers haven't yet. And so he reminds them of their commitment. And he says in verse 16. And this is what they say. And this is why Joshua 1 is just so glorious of a picture. Verse 16.

Whatever you command, we will do. Wherever you tell us to go, we will go. We remember what we said. And we are wholehearted. We are going to do it.

They aren't going to leave their brothers to fight it out alone. They were in it together. They were committed. They had committed to help. And they were going to help. They were going to help each other.

And help they did. Brothers and sisters, we need each other, don't we? They get committed to help each other.

[31 : 26] And they helped. And if you are a church member, we all took those same sorts of commitments and vows.

You made those vows, the same sort of vows as these Gadites and Reubenites. You said you would help your brothers and sisters.

You stood up in front and promised to obey, just like the two and a half tribes did. And you promised to love and care for your brothers, just like they did. You made the same commitments.

And the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half tribe of Manasseh stuck to it. Their brothers needed them. And their brothers had them.

And that's what so many of you are doing. And I just say keep it up. But they even go further than that. Look how this chapter ends.

[32 : 25] It ends with the people encouraging Joshua. Be strong and courageous. They're so on board.

They're so committed to what God has said. That they are telling their leader, don't fall behind. Be strong and courageous. Do leaders need encouragement?

Yes, they do. Yes, they do. Do your pastors need you to encourage them? Oh, yes, they do. If Joshua did.

Joshua did. And we certainly do. And they encouraged Joshua with their prompt obedience. They were a joy to Joshua and not a burden.

Again, Hebrews says, Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. Obey them so that their work will be a joy and not a burden. That's how you can encourage your leaders.

[33 : 31] Joshua needed that. Because the greatest discouragement can come from the sheep. But the greatest encouragement, likewise, can come from the very same sheep.

And the people needed Joshua to remind them of their commitments. To hold them to their commitments. But Joshua also needed their encouragement.

Their obedience. Their obedience. And that's just to say, we all need each other. The Christian life is a challenge.

It's a high and difficult calling. It's as harrowing. It's as difficult as taking the land from giants.

We're not fighting against flesh and blood. We're fighting against powers and authorities in the heavenly places. In high places. It's a hard thing.

[34 : 28] And we need each other. Brothers and sisters need each other. The people in Judah needed the people's help from Reuben.

Brothers and sisters need each other. And leaders and people need each other. And that's what you see here in Joshua. The people kept their commitments to each other.

And so, as I end, I'll just remind you that you made those commitments to each other. No one made you say it. No one forced you into it.

You made those promises freely. So remember them. You said you would obey Christ. Unreserved submission to Christ.

You said you would obey your leaders. You said you would love and care for one another. You said you would do what they did here in Joshua 1. And as you read the rest of Joshua, you see what happens when they keep their commitments.

[35 : 39] They overcome. Together they inherit the land. Brothers and sisters, it says we keep those commitments to each other. That we are going to enter our heavenly Canaan.

And we're going to win that prize. And that inheritance. And so, that's what they did. And the rest of Joshua says, you'll be blessed if you do it too.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you for your sustaining grace. Thank you for your mercy to me. Thank you for your help to each one of us.

And for this encouraging example of these folks in Joshua. I pray that you would help us to be more like them. I thank you for the grace that you've given to my brothers and sisters here.

For your love that you've shed abroad in their hearts. That is pouring out of them in love toward one another. And towards you.

[36 : 40] And I just pray for greater grace. More mercy. That we might become a people that is wholly committed to you. And wholly committed to one another.

Lord, you know that there are lost among us. I pray that the gospel as it was preached today.

Would bear fruit in their lives. That you would bring them in. To the number of those who are being saved. We ask this in Jesus' name for his sake.

He is a great king. He is worthy of many, many people. All that you give him. So I pray that you would look upon him and honor him. Even as you help us.

And it's in his name. Amen. Amen.