

September 6
Lesson 1 (KJV)

Joshua Leads Courageously

Devotional Reading: [Daniel 10:18–21](#)

Background Scripture: [Exodus 19–24](#);
[Deuteronomy 31:1–8](#); [34:1–12](#); [Joshua](#)

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[Joshua 1:1–11](#)

1 Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD it came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying,

2 Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel.

3 Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.

4 From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast.

5 There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor for-

sake thee.

6 Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swear unto their fathers to give them.

7 Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.

8 This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

9 Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

10 Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying,

11 Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which the LORD your God giveth you to possess it.

Key Text

Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.—Joshua 1:9

Generations: From Canaan to
Jerusalem

Unit 1: From Nomadic Tribes to Settled People

Lessons 1–4

Lesson Aims

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Summarize the vision of leadership that Joshua received from the Lord.
2. Explain parallels between the Lord's directives to Joshua and to Moses.
3. Write a definition of *courage* and make a plan to live courageously in the upcoming week.

Lesson Outline

Introduction

- A. Courage and Confidence
- B. Lesson Context

I. Commission (Joshua 1:1–6)

- A. Exhortation to Joshua (vv. 1–2)

- B. Extent of the Land (vv. 3–4)

- C. Encouragement to the People (vv. 5–6)

Daily Displays of Courage

II. Command (Joshua 1:7–9)

- A. Courage and Obedience (v. 7)
- B. Meditation and Obedience (v. 8)

The Risks of Rushing

- C. Courage and God's Presence (v. 9)

III. Crossing (Joshua 1:10–11)

- A. Ordering the Officers (v. 10)
- B. Preparing the People (v. 11)

Conclusion

- A. Courageously Committing to Obedience
- B. Prayer
- C. Thought to Remember

How to Say It

Euphrates *You-fray-teez*

Hittites *Hit-ites* or *Hit-tites*

Midianites *Mid-ee-un-ites*

Moab *Mo-ab*

Pentateuch *Pen-ta-teuk*

Mediterranean *Med-uh-tuh-ray-nee-un*

victuals *vih-tulz*

Introduction

I. Commission

(Joshua 1:1–6)

A. Exhortation to Joshua (vv. 1–2)

1. Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD it came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying.

Moses dies at age 120 ([Deuteronomy 34:7](#)), and what follows takes place after that death. The name *Joshua* appears more than two dozen times in the Pentateuch, the designation for the first five books of the Old Testament. In ancient Hebrew, the name means “The Lord saves” or “The Lord is salvation.” Joshua is introduced in [Exodus 17:8–13](#) as a warrior. He is further identified as being *the son of Nun*, a descendent of Ephraim ([Numbers 13:8](#); [1 Chronicles 7:20, 27](#)).



Visual for [Lesson 1](#). Display this visual as you lead a conversation based on the discussion questions associated with [Joshua 1:7a](#).

The word translated as the noun *minister* is actually a verb in the Hebrew text. This fact highlights Joshua's service to his elder and mentor. Joshua had done so since his youth (see [Numbers 11:28](#)). The designation also is found in [Exodus 24:13](#) and [33:11](#). The designation draws a parallel between Joshua's service to Moses and Moses' position as *the servant of the Lord*, although the Hebrew words translated “minister” and “servant” are different.

2. Moses my servant is dead; Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel.

The word of the Lord to Joshua affirms a change of leadership for the Israelites. Moses is *dead*, and now Joshua will become a leader who will speak for the Lord and guide *the children of Israel* into the land. Centuries earlier, God had promised Abram that his descendants would be given the land of Canaan ([Genesis 12:7](#); [15:8–13](#); [17:8](#)). God reiterated the same promise to his son and grandson as well ([26:3](#); [35:12](#)). Moses received the same promise when the Lord called him to lead the Israelites to a land “flowing with milk and honey” ([Exodus 3:8](#); compare [Leviticus 20:24](#); [Numbers 13:27](#); [Deuteronomy 31:20](#)). At the time of

Moses' death, the people had not yet taken any land west of the Jordan River. However, in a sense, the land had already been granted to them by the Lord, as it had been promised to their ancestors.

This crossing would have been relatively simple at the end of the dry season, as the *Jordan* River would be a quiet stream. However, it is now the end of the spring rainy season ([Joshua 4:19](#)). Heavy rains and melting snow have caused the Jordan to be in flood stage ([3:15](#); [4:18](#)). Despite these challenges, God will make the crossing possible. This miracle will validate Joshua's leadership and demonstrate the people's willingness to obey the Lord and take *the land* for themselves (see [Lesson 2](#)).

What Do You Think?

Have you ever had to follow in someone else's footsteps or take over a big responsibility? How did that feel?

Digging Deeper

In what ways will you prioritize being attentive to God's directives during seasons of transition?

B. Extent of the Land (vv. 3–4)

3. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.

The Lord reiterates to Joshua the prom-

ises that He made to Moses regarding the land in [Deuteronomy 11:24](#). The Israelites do not yet possess the land, but to receive such a promise from the Lord is almost the same as holding the title deed to it. Although conflict and battles will occur ([Joshua 11:6–23](#); see [Lesson 3](#)), the victory ultimately belongs to the Lord and His people.

4. From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast.

The description of the extent of the territory aligns with previous statements (see [Genesis 15:18–21](#); [Exodus 23:31](#); [Numbers 34:3–12](#); [Deuteronomy 1:7–8](#); [11:24](#)). The description begins in the southernmost region of the land (*the wilderness*) and extends to the northwest, where the mountains of *Lebanon* are located. To the northeast and east is the *Euphrates* River, often referred to simply as “the river” ([Exodus 23:31](#)) or “the flood” ([Joshua 24:14–15](#)). This river lies more than 400 straight-line miles northeast of the Sea of Galilee. The northern area is summarized by the phrase *all the land of the Hittites*. At the time of Joshua, in approximately the fourteenth century

BC, the Hittites are a rising power. They controlled regions of what is now modern-day Turkey. The western boundary, *the great sea*, refers to the Mediterranean Sea.

C. Encouragement to the People (vv. 5–6)

5. There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.

When God issues commands, He often follows them with supporting information that provides assurance. The Israelites will not acquire the land through their own strength. Instead, they will take possession of it solely because the Lord has granted it to them.

This instance is not the first time the Lord has promised His presence to Joshua (see [Deuteronomy 31:23](#)). By ensuring that no one will *be able to stand* in Joshua's way, the Lord guarantees the fulfillment of His promises and presents Himself as a warrior fighting on behalf of His people.

Joshua has already experienced the realities of God's promise. During the final days of Moses, the Israelites captured sixty cities in the region east of Galilee ([Deuteronomy 3:4](#)). Additionally,

the Israelites did not suffer any casualties in a previous battle with the Midianites ([Numbers 31:49](#)).

What Do You Think?

When was a time you felt that you needed a reminder that you were not forsaken by God? How did you grow spiritually in that time?

Digging Deeper

How will you encourage another believer by sharing the promise of God's steadfast presence (see [Matthew 28:20](#))?

Daily Displays of Courage

Jesse faced tremendous challenges throughout her life. She survived toxic and abusive relationships that lasted for years, enduring much pain and heartbreak. Despite it all, she displayed significant courage. Through a series of letters we exchanged, she taught me that courage arises from many small choices. She learned to trust God daily, maintain hope in His promises for redemption, and seek God's presence amid her challenges. Her letters revealed God's faithfulness and the courage that she found as a result.

Witnessing God's faithfulness to others has a way of humbling us and inspiring us to lead lives of courage. Joshua saw how the God who was with Moses would also be with him. Because of this, Joshua could

take courage, knowing he would also experience God's presence, guidance, and direction.

The God who was with Joshua also promises His presence to us ([Matthew 28:20](#)). We can take courage from this promise, and our courage will testify to others of God's faithfulness and provision. How has witnessing the courage of others encouraged you to deepen your trust in the Lord?

—KS

6. Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swear unto their fathers to give them.

A form of the command *be strong and of a good courage* appears a total of eleven times in the Old Testament ([Deuteronomy 31:6–7, 23](#); [Joshua 1:6–7, 9, 18; 10:25](#); [1 Chronicles 22:13](#); [28:20](#); [2 Chronicles 32:7](#)).

Dictionaries offer several definitions of *courage*. A summary of them would be that courage is “the quality that enables one to meet danger and difficulties with firmness or valor, despite feelings of fear or inadequacy.” Joshua may have feelings of fear or inadequacy as he leads the people. His mentor, Moses, definitely felt inadequate ([Exodus 3:11](#)).

Even so, the Lord has chosen Joshua

and given him a task to accomplish. The promise *unto their fathers* that God has sworn to fulfill is recorded in [Genesis 12:1–3; 15:18; 26:3; 28:13; 35:12](#).

II. Command ([Joshua 1:7–9](#))

A. Courage and Obedience (v. 7)

7a. Only be thou strong and very courageous.

The imperative *be strong and very courageous* is important enough to be repeated (see commentary on [Joshua 1:6](#), above). This command serves as the “marching order” for Joshua and the Israelites preparing to enter the land of Canaan. To be cowardly instead of courageous would reveal a lack of trust in God.

What Do You Think?

When you are prone to feeling fear or inadequacy, what promises of God give you courage?

Digging Deeper

Where in your life do you feel God is asking you to step out in courage right now?

7b. That thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whitherso-

ever thou goest.

Joshua will model courage and success by obeying *the law* the Lord gave the Israelites. The practices and promises offered by the pagan people who inhabit the land will be very enticing, as they already have been ([Numbers 25](#)). But Joshua must be determined not to go with them. His trust is not to be in a smorgasbord belief system—some of this and a little of that. He cannot swerve in any direction so as to taste what looks appealing.

As Joshua considers this requirement, perhaps he thinks of God’s command found in [Deuteronomy 28:14](#) (compare [5:32–33](#); [17:11](#), [20](#)). Joshua’s courageous leadership depends primarily on his willingness to obey the Lord. Before he can be a military leader of the people, he needs first to model spiritual leadership.

B. Meditation and Obedience (v. 8)

8. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

The warning that *this book ... shall not depart out of thy mouth* may sound some-

what unusual at first—as if Joshua should refrain from discussing *the law* with others. Joshua is to “keep” the law in his mouth so that he can do three important things: reflect on it, obey it, and enjoy the blessings of obedience. Success in conquering the promised land depends on this ([Deuteronomy 29:9](#))!

Joshua will know the contents of the law by meditating on it *day and night*. As the newly appointed leader, he will need to make significant decisions throughout each day, but those decisions must be evaluated in light of what God has instructed. All hours of the day or night are good times to contemplate God’s ways and His Word (compare [Psalm 119:15](#), [23](#), [48](#), [78](#), [97](#), [99](#), [148](#)). By prioritizing these commands, Joshua and his leadership will experience blessings (compare [1:1–3](#)).

The words translated *prosperous* and *success* each occur dozens of times in the Old Testament. But this is the only place where those two Hebrew words occur together. To be prosperous is not necessarily referring to financial success. Instead, it addresses the broader concept of “flourishing” (compare [2 Chronicles 14:7](#)).

What Do You Think?

How can you better prioritize the study of and reflection on God’s Word in Scrip-

ture?

Digging Deeper

How can you incorporate new ways to reflect on God's Word in the early morning or late at night?

The Risks of Rushing

I worked for a commercial insurance provider, spending my days answering customers' billing questions. My computer screens were filled with programs that gave me a picture of their accounts. One particular program displayed the history of changes made to each account. When responding to questions, I would review this program and complete a series of calculations to respond promptly.

However, sometimes, I rushed the calculations and accidentally entered incorrect numbers or transposed the figures on the computer screen. More than once, this led to my giving the customer a wrong answer, much to their aggravation. In those cases, I usually identified the error if I slowed down and reviewed my calculations.

The Lord commanded Joshua to meditate on God's Word day and night. Joshua was not to rush through five minutes of morning devotions. He needed to realize that his number one task was to prioritize, reflect on, and obey God's Word.

Are your days too busy to reflect on God's Word in Scripture? You may need to slow down! In what ways can you (re)-focus on God's Word throughout your daily activities?

—KS

C. Courage and God's Presence (v. 9)

9. Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.

The Lord reassures Joshua by posing a rhetorical question that should remove any doubt about the outcome. In this case, the Lord intends for the people's obedience to fulfill what He has planned for centuries: a provision of a particular land to Abraham and his descendants. The Lord would oversee the fulfillment of that promise Himself.

This is the third time in this chapter that the Lord encourages Joshua to *be strong and of a good courage* as he assumes leadership of the people. Moses had given Joshua the same challenge when appointing him as successor ([Deuteronomy 31:7, 23](#)). While Joshua previously benefited from the support and wisdom of Moses, that era has now changed. Joshua is on his own—with the promises of God as his

blessed assurance.

III. Crossing (Joshua 1:10–11)

A. Ordering the Officers (v. 10)

10. Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying.

Joshua's preparatory commands to *the officers* demonstrate his trust in God and his willingness to begin entering the land. This group may include elders and administrative leaders (examples: [Numbers 11:16](#); [Deuteronomy 1:13–16](#); [29:10](#); [31:28](#)).

B. Preparing the People (v. 11)

11a. Pass through the host, and command the people, saying.

The word translated *host* refers to the camp of the Israelites, as it is translated both ways in [Exodus 16:13](#). When the verse now before us is combined with the verse just before it, a threefold order of leadership for the Israelites is apparent: (1) The Lord directs Joshua; (2) Joshua gives commands to officers; and (3) the officers ensure that *the people* receive proper direction. In modern military parlance, this is called “the chain of command.” This will remind those in the army of Israel—potentially more than 600,000 soldiers ([Numbers 26:2](#), [51](#))—of

who is in charge.

11b. Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which the LORD your God giveth you to possess it.

As Joshua receives his marching orders from God, the Israelites are camped on the plains of Moab ([Numbers 26:3](#), [63](#)). That area is east of the *Jordan* River and just north of the Dead Sea. Historical hindsight tells us that their need to take food (*victuals*) is only a temporary, in-between step because of the coming shift from receiving manna to being able to eat from the produce of the land they are to enter ([Exodus 16:35](#); [Joshua 5:12](#)). When the people approached the land decades earlier, they had backed down (see [Lesson Context](#)). This time, however, is to be different.

What Do You Think?

What might it look like for you to spiritually prepare for what God is calling you to do next?

Digging Deeper

Who is an accountability partner or spiritual mentor who can offer support and wisdom during your preparation?

Conclusion

A. Courageously Committing to

Obedience

Be courageous as God leads you!

For the young family described in the Introduction, the courageous trust of the parents paid off—I should know because it's the story of my parents. Because of their courage and trust in God, my older sibling and I could thrive. The situation of my parents and that of Joshua with the ancient Israelites is significantly different. However, both reveal tremendous human courage by trusting that God would provide.

We discern two points of application. First, God can and will use anyone as an instrument to achieve His will. Second, God promises to provide for us as we follow His lead. In neither case is worldly measures of success guaranteed. Instead, God promises eternal, spiritual blessings when we follow His will. Courage and trust are what Joshua was to exhibit. Will you exhibit the same in whatever role God has assigned you?

B. Prayer

Lord God, we want to be strong and courageous. Show us how to trust Your will in all situations. Grant us peace in the uncertainty and in the waiting. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

C. Thought to Remember