

**"The Presence"**

8/1/10

9 & 10:45 am

Joshua 1

Series, *"A New Beginning"*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The new series we are beginning this morning will take us through the OT book of Joshua.

It is a very exciting book full of practical life lessons that surround the theme of *"New Beginnings."*

In the Bible there are many new beginnings. Thank God there is the opportunity to begin life anew when we are born spiritually, our soul brought from death to life when we confess our sins and invite Jesus to forgive us and to take control of our lives. Life has a new beginning.

There are also new beginnings for people who are already followers of Jesus; at times God calls us to turn around, to begin our relationship with Him anew and afresh through confession and re-surrendering our will to His.

Joshua is a record of one of the most significant new beginnings for the people of Israel. It's a new generation of people with a new leader, entering into a new homeland.

As the story begins, the new generation is physically standing at the border to the promised land. Forty years before, their parents had stood at a similar spot. But they refused to trust God by going into the land He had promised to give them.

They chose fear over faith. They trusted in their own assessment of the situation rather than believing the promise God had given, and the command to go in and take the land from the people who lived there. They turned back in fear and disobedience, even though they had repeatedly seen God's miraculous powers in Egypt and the desert.

So, God sent them back into the desert, and there, for 40 years, every one of the adults 20 years old and above, died. All but Joshua and Caleb because they had trusted God and had tried to persuade their people to trust God and to take the land.

So now, Joshua, the new leader, following the death of Moses, has brought the people to the eastern boundary of the promised land, the Jordan River.

God has brought them to the point of a new beginning, a promise He made to Abraham hundreds of years before.

The clear theme of this first chapter is ... *When God leads in a New Beginning He promises to be with you.*

**OPEN** to Joshua 1 (**PAGE** 331)

### **I. God is Present in Every Generation** (Joshua 1:1-5)

**READ** Joshua 1:1-5 **"After 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.**

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

**4 Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates - all the Hittite country - to the Great Sea on the west.**

**5 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."**

Joshua is beginning a brand new journey. He stood by Moses' side for 40 years, serving him and learning from him

- He was with Moses when God parted the Red Sea.
- He was on the mountain with Moses for 40 days and nights when God gave Moses the 10 Commandments.
- He was with Moses in the tent of meeting when God met with Moses face to face.
- They were together when the Israelites refused to go into the promised land.
- And he lived in the desert with them for 40 years, sharing in the punishment of the nation.
- He saw Moses at his best and at his very worst.

Joshua is loaded with experience, but what's happening now is new. Joshua has never been the point man before. He's not been the one where the buck stops.

It's a new thing, a new beginning.

But what is the same is that the same God Who was with Moses is with him.

In v. 3 and 5 God says to Moses:

**v. 3: "I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses."**

*"The promises I made to Moses, I make to you."*

**v. 5b: "As I was with Moses, so I will be with you."**

*"I was with the last generation's leader and I am now with you."*

**v. 5c: "I will never leave [relax effort] you nor forsake [desert] you."**

*"I will be actively with you, I will never abandon you."*

*God is present, God is active, God is with Joshua and God is working in every generation!*

The stories we read in the Bible are not stories of a God Who is no longer around or Who is different today.

God is present in every generation, and *when God leads in a New Beginning He promises to be with you.*

## **II. God is Present in His Word** (Joshua 1:6-8)

Before we read the next few verses, I want to read Hebrews 4:12, which tells us that God is present in His Word:

Hebrews 4:12 **"For the word of God [*logos*; the written word] is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart."**

God's Word is alive because He is still alive. He is alive to fulfill whatever He has promised. Just because the words He inspired were written thousands of years ago does not mean they are invalid now. He is alive to fulfill His living Word!

### **A. Living Words of promise** (v. 6)

**READ** Joshua 1:6 **“Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them.”**

*When I make a promise, I am there to keep it!*

The promise of the land: Genesis 12:7, 15:18; Exodus 32:13; Deuteronomy 12:10

This is the promise of provision: shelter, food, security (of a homeland).

He tells Joshua to be strong and courageous *because* He will be present to keep the promise He has made.

B. Living words to be obeyed (v. 7-8)

**READ** 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.**

**8 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.”**

Notice how God emphasizes obedience:

v. 7b: “Be careful to obey all the law My servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, ...”

v. 8: “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.”

**Be strong and very courageous** in following My commands!

## **ILLUSTRATION**

How is your time with God in His Word?

Is it something you truly value? Do you read it? Do you meditate upon it?

Do you stay away because you think it’s just a list of things you’re supposed to be doing and a second list of things you’re not supposed to be doing?

God has given us His living Word, His Words, through which He still speaks to us, so that we can have a living relationship with Him.

He gives us His Word so that through it we can meet with Him, hear from Him, sort our life, get direction. Notice, twice He says that as we understand and obey His Word, we will be successful in life, successful in the assignments He gives us, the new beginnings He leads us into.

- Do you want to have a successful marriage?
- Do you want to have a solid, happy family?
- Do you want to be successful on the job?
- Do you want to walk in wisdom and joy as a follower of Jesus?
- Do you want to be on target in serving Him?
- Do you want to be used by Him to share His love and His message with others?

Put vs. 7-8 into practice.

They are living Words of promise, living Words to be obeyed...

Living Words through which you meet with God Himself and realize that *He is with you!*

### **III. God is Present in His Commitment to You** (Joshua 1:9)

**READ** Joshua 1:9 **"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."**

### **ILLUSTRATION**

"One summer night during a severe thunderstorm a mother was tucking her small son into bed. She was about to turn the light off when, in a trembling voice, he asked, 'Mommy, will you stay with me all night?' The mother smiled, gave him a warm, reassuring hug, and said tenderly, 'I can't dear. I have to sleep in Daddy's room.'

"A long silence followed as she moved toward the door. At last it was broken by a shaky voice saying, 'The big sissy!'"

Joshua 1:9 **“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.”**

The words **‘Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged’** often parallel **‘be strong and courageous’** and help us understand its meaning.

Joshua is facing a momentous, risky, humanly impossible task. From a human perspective, to defeat the mighty tribes in Canaan, including the Anakites, the tribe of giants, is a suicide mission.

For Joshua, the “danger is that fears, feelings of inadequacy, and doubts might cripple his resolve, muddle his mind, and shake his confidence.

And when the Israelites sense his confusion, wavering, and tentativeness, it would sow despair, if not dissent, and endanger the mission.

So, the temptation Joshua faces is to back off from “risks, to strike compromises, or to retreat altogether. To **‘be strong and courageous’** means to be steady, resolute, bold, unafraid.

But, we see again, that “Undergirding Joshua’s confidence is the simple fact that he is not alone. *Yahweh All-Powerful leads the way and surrounds him with His presence.*” (NIVAC)

God is not telling Joshua to pull up his courage from within, but He commands him to be courageous BECAUSE God will always be with him to accomplish what He has promised.

### **ILLUSTRATION**

“Many years ago I was walking in Newport Beach in Southern California with two friends. Two of us were on staff together at a church, and one was an elder at the same church. We walked past a bar where a fight had been going on. The fight had spilled out into the street, just like in an old western. Several guys were beating up on another guy, and he was bleeding from the forehead. We knew we had to do something, so we went over to break up the fight. I don’t think we were very intimidating. (All we did was walk over and say,) ‘Hey, you guys, cut that out!’ It didn’t do much good.

Then all of a sudden they looked at us with fear in their eyes. The guys who had been beating up on the one guy stopped and started to slink away. I didn’t know why until we turned and looked behind us. Out of the bar had come the biggest man I think I’ve ever seen. He was something like six feet, seven inches, maybe 300 pounds, maybe 2

percent body fat. Just huge. We called him 'Bubba' (not to his face, but afterwards, when we talked about him). Bubba didn't say a word. He just stood there and flexed. You could tell he was hoping they would try and have a go at him. All of a sudden my attitude was transformed, and I said to those guys, 'You better not let us catch you coming around here again!' I was a different person because I had great, big Bubba. I was ready to confront with resolve and firmness. I was released from anxiety and fear. I was filled with boldness and confidence. I was ready to help somebody that needed helping. I was ready to serve where serving was required. Why? Because I had a great, big Bubba. I was convinced that I was not alone. I was safe.

If I were convinced that Bubba were with me 24 hours a day, I would have a fundamentally different approach to my life. If I knew Bubba was behind me all day long, you wouldn't want to mess with me. But he's not. I can't count on Bubba. Again and again, the writers of Scripture pose this question for us: How big is your God? Again and again we are reminded that One Who is greater than Bubba has come, and you don't have to wonder whether or not He'll show up. He's always there. You don't have to be afraid. You don't have to live your life in hiding. You have a great, big God, and He's called you to do something, so get on with it!  
(John Ortberg, in the sermon Big God/Little God, PreachingToday.com)

#### **IV. God is Present in the Faithful Support of Fellow Believers** (Joshua 1:10-18)

##### A. The support of the leaders (v. 10-11)

**READ** Joshua 1:10-11 **"So Joshua ordered the officers of the people: 11 '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."'"**

Joshua tells the leaders what God has said, and they act.

They tell the people to get their supplies ready: food, maybe a few pieces of extra clothing, a knapsack with a few essentials. He gives them three days.

The three days is not to decide whether they will follow Joshua or not. It is not putting off what God has called them to do. It is solely to do the necessary preparation—food gathering and preparation for the 1 million or so people (see Exodus 12:37).

##### B. The support of the East-Jordan tribes (v. 12-18)

**READ** Joshua 1:16-18 **“Then they answered Joshua, ‘Whatever you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go.**  
**17 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.**  
**18 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!”**

The leaders are affirming God’s presence and call on Joshua’s life. They are pledging their support.

### **ILLUSTRATION**

“We are not alone. We are surrounded by sisters and brothers, all part of the body of Christ. They pick up our spirits when we are down, lift us up when we fall, walk with us through our dark valleys, and celebrate our triumphs. Our task is to look up from our isolated self-preoccupation and recognize that they are there – and that they care, too.

“Some time ago, I heard a fascinating story that brings home this truth about Jesus’ presence with us. A mother had agreed to drive her son’s car from Michigan to California as part of his move there. It was Christmas-time, so the plan called for her to drive the car out, for her husband to fly there for the holiday, and for the two of them to fly home from California together. The day before her departure, however, the woman fell and broke her left wrist. Despite the cumbersome cast from wrist to elbow, she decided to go anyway and carefully planned the long trip.

“About the fourth day out, she felt so tired that she pulled off the road for a short nap, then drove to a restaurant for coffee. As she stepped outside the restaurant, a man approached and asked if she was driving a Ford Explorer with Michigan plates, and whether she had pulled off the road somewhere earlier. The woman was apprehensive about being questioned by a stranger, but he assured her that he meant no harm. Once she answered his questions, he asked her to wait while he made a phone call and then promised to explain.

“When he returned, he told her that truck drivers had been following her since Indiana. One of them had noticed this little white-haired lady, with a cast on her left arm, driving a stick-shift across the country. They had taken it upon themselves to watch over her. Unbeknownst to her, they carefully tracked her to the motels she stayed each evening. Each morning another trucker would pick up her trail and shadow her progress. If a trucker had to exit, he would radio another driver to take his place. When she pulled off for that nap, they had lost track of her and were about to alert the State Police. They were still seriously searching for her when one of them spotted her car at the restaurant. The woman had no idea that somebody cared enough about her to

initiate such a protection plan. Until that moment, she had been totally unaware that, across all the miles, an alert, strong presence was looking after her day and night.

"The presence of Jesus with us is no less watchful and faithful. Armed with His simple assurance, "I am with you always," we Christian soldiers can daily march into war. The spiritual battlefield may be our own homes, neighborhoods, job sites – perhaps even our own souls. Our lives seek to mirror the model of our Lord – or, at least, that is our dream. Like Him, we bring good news to a broken, hurting, lost world. And we do so without allowing fear to stop us because of the wonderful reality that, come what may, we are 'never alone.'" (NIVAC)

*"Father in Heaven, thank You for the call to new beginnings. Thank You for Your promise to always be with me as I walk in obedience to Your Word, even when I'm afraid. Thank You for proving You are worthy of all my trust! In Jesus' name, Amen."*