



## JOSHUA: A FAITH ROOTED IN GOD'S WORD

THE POINT: Faith is grounded in obedience to God's Word.

THE PASSAGE: Joshua 1:1-9, 16-18 (CSB)

DATE: August 23, 2026

## GETTING STARTED

Who are some national heroes from the past that you admire?

### Life Connection

We dream about becoming our heroes because we hold them in such high regard. It's extremely rare for a man or woman to capture the status of a national hero. Based upon the evidence, the United States of America's chief hero is George Washington. States, cities, a district, and countless other streets and buildings are named after this iconic general and first president. Considerably less is known about Washington's successor as general.

The men and women who have followed in the footsteps of Washington's military and public service since have learned from his example, but undoubtedly, they've developed the skills and confidence that qualify them for service in these vital roles on their own. And future leaders will gain valuable wisdom and personal courage as they study the lives of these heroes too. The cycle continues.

### Background

Joshua, God's chosen successor of Moses, Israel's national hero, witnessed Moses's humility and great faith as he prepared himself to be obedient to God when called upon. In this study, we'll be students of Joshua's faith grounded in obedience to God's Word. And who knows what God will choose to do through us as a result?

Direct attention to The Point of this lesson: *Faith is grounded in obedience to God's Word.*

## STUDY THE BIBLE

READ: JOSHUA 1:1-5

<sup>1</sup> After the death of Moses the LORD's servant, the LORD spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses's assistant: <sup>2</sup> "Moses my servant is dead. Now you and all the people prepare to cross over the Jordan to the land I am giving the Israelites. <sup>3</sup> I have given you every place where the sole of your foot treads, just as I promised Moses. <sup>4</sup> Your territory will be from the wilderness and Lebanon to the great river, the Euphrates River—all the land of the Hittites—and west to the Mediterranean Sea. <sup>5</sup> No one will be able to stand against you as long as you live. I will be with you, just as I was with Moses. I will not leave you or abandon

you.

**Recap:** *Can you imagine being an eyewitness to some of the most incredible and historic events related to the Exodus of the Hebrew nation from Egypt? Joshua witnessed the impact of the ten plagues on Pharaoh and Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, and Israel's forty-year struggle in the wilderness. Joshua also had a front-row seat watching Moses lead this traveling nation, serving as their prophet, leader, and judge.*

The Bible records more instances where God spoke to Moses, and Joshua knew the subject of many of their talks. God shared His Law with Moses. God also emphasized Israel's need to obey His Word.

**GUIDE:** Use the commentary for the verses to explain the significance of the death of Moses.

God's promise to Joshua can be summed up in three phrases:

1. "I will give you victory on your journey."
2. "Your victory has boundaries."
3. "I will be with you and never abandon you."

How has your faith benefited from the example of others?

Who has had the biggest influence on your understanding of the Bible?

**Transition:** Our faith benefits from the example of others. In the next verses, we see that our faith is to be centered in God's Word.

**READ: JOSHUA 1:6-9**

<sup>6</sup> "Be strong and courageous, for you will distribute the land I swore to their ancestors to give them as an inheritance. <sup>7</sup> Above all, be strong and very courageous to observe carefully the whole instruction my servant Moses commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right or the left, so that you will have success wherever you go. <sup>8</sup> This book of instruction must not depart from your mouth; you are to meditate on it day and night so that you may carefully observe everything written in it. For then you will prosper and succeed in whatever you do. <sup>9</sup> Haven't I commanded you: be strong and courageous? Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

**Recap:** *When we read the Bible, we often forget that Scripture includes well over six hundred conversations between God and His people. Imagine hearing God's voice instead of the familiar sound of our internal voice as we read the Bible. During this conversation, God told His new commander to be strong and courageous no fewer than three times.*

**GUIDE:** Use the commentary for the verses to further explain the encouragement to Joshua to be strong and courageous.

How has following God's Word allowed you to succeed in life?

**Recap:** Every person who places their faith in God and His promises must be reminded that their faith isn't a game of chance. God's Word is straightforward and clear. If you find yourself in a difficult season, remember to listen to God's promises of victory; they will chase away the fear and discouragement.

Finally, faith in God is not lived in isolation. God promises that: "Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God—God remains in him and he in God" (1 John 4:15). Following God's Word keeps us close to Him.

Why might God have repeated His command to "be strong and courageous" three times?

When have you especially felt God's presence with you?

**Transition:** In the next verses, we see that our faith should set an example for others.

**READ: JOSHUA 1:16-18**

<sup>16</sup> They answered Joshua, "Everything you have commanded us we will do, and everywhere you send us we will go. <sup>17</sup> We will obey you, just as we obeyed Moses in everything. Certainly the LORD your God will be with you, as he was with Moses. <sup>18</sup> Anyone who rebels against your order and does not obey your words in all that you command him, will be put to death. Above all, be strong and courageous!"

**Pray:** Take a few moments to pray for the group; pray that the Lord would help each person to be strong and courageous. Ask Him to provide opportunities for them to model strength and courage for others.

**Recap:** Fresh from his conversation with God, Joshua spoke to the officers of the people instructing them to prepare the camp for the crossing of the Jordan River. They would have three days.

Joshua certainly had time to reflect on this day since God's children left Egypt forty years earlier. He and Caleb were the only two of the original nation left to enter the promised land, who were over the age of twenty. They were the minority voice of the twelve spies who trusted God and encouraged the people to enter the land.

**GUIDE:** Use the commentary for the verses to explain the people's response to Joshua's leadership.

**Recap:** The officers' final words to their newly appointed boss echoed God's encouraging words to Joshua, recorded in verse seven. From their vantage point, Joshua had to be strong and courageous in his obedience to God, in his leadership of the army, and as he dealt with a historically rebellious nation.

Joshua wanted to obey God and demonstrate his faith to those who would take his place one day. Your faith is on display as well. You may not be leading a nation out of the wilderness and into the promised land, but your example impacts the people who will follow after you. So, let's

set an example for others.

What are some ways our faith can set an example for others?

What are some disciplines that help you model faith for others?

## RESPONSE

**Observe.** Faith can be strengthened by observing people who live a faith-based life. Choose someone in your life who walks with God and carefully observe how this person follows Him. Perhaps you could shadow this individual for a day and learn from him or her.

**Focus.** Observing others' beliefs is a great first step, but ultimately your faith should be centered on God's Word. Focus your attention on God's Word, and your faith will grow in a manner that pleases God. Read, study, and make God's Word the foundation of your faith. If you don't have a plan for Bible study, ask for help from your group leader.

**Display.** Let your faith practice be an example for other people to follow. Seek out others to mentor and be their example of living a life of faith. Remember to be strong and courageous!

## WRAP IT UP

Read or restate **The Point** for this session: **Faith is grounded in obedience to God's Word.**

Pray: Thank God for the guidance He gives us through His Word. Ask Him for the wisdom to apply His Word as we seek to expand His kingdom.

## COMMENTARY

### JOSHUA 1:1-5

**Connection to The Point:** Moses showed Joshua what it looks like to obediently follow God.

**Death of Moses (v. 1).** Though imperfect and sinful, Moses was an example of obedience to God's Word. While God is the main character in every book of the Bible, Moses is the main human character in four of the first five books in the Bible. His shadow looms large over the entire Old Testament. From the obedience and bravery of his mother and sister through his own life and finally death in the book of Deuteronomy, Moses is consistently presented as a man who loved God and sought to obey Him. Moses had died at the end of the book of Deuteronomy outside of the promised land. In the Lord's grace, Moses was allowed to see the promised land; however, his sin during the wilderness wandering prohibited him from entering (Deut. 32:51-52).

The pronouncement of Moses's death here at the beginning of the book of Joshua clearly communicates that God's plan of redemption is not dependent upon any one human. Moses was dead. He would not be coming back from the dead. The coming of the One who would crush the head of the seed of the serpent (Gen. 3:15) was still in the future. He is the One who would overcome not only sin but also death in order to be the true leader of the exodus who would lead His people not merely out of physical bondage, but out of bondage to sin and

spiritual death itself.

**Joshua son of Nun (v. 1).** Joshua did not just come out of nowhere in this book. Joshua first showed up in the Pentateuch in Exodus 17. Later, Joshua and Caleb were the only two faithful spies when Moses sent twelve spies into the promised land (Num. 13). Ten of the twelve spies returned in fear and trepidation. The ten unfaithful spies declared that while the land was beautiful, there were giants in the land who would crush the people of Israel if they attempted to enter the promised land. Meanwhile, Joshua and Caleb, while not denying that the task would be difficult, professed faith in the Lord. The Lord would deliver these mighty men into the hands of the people of Israel (14:8-9). Joshua and Caleb's faithfulness earned them the wrath of their countrymen, but the Lord was pleased with them. Joshua appears in various places in the Pentateuch as Moses's assistant and eventually as Moses's apparent successor to the leadership of the people of Israel (Deut. 31).

**Prepare to cross over (v. 2).** The crossing of the Jordan River is both an echo of the crossing of the Red Sea in Exodus and a foreshadowing of Jesus's leading His people into the presence of God the Father. Moses's leadership brought the people of Israel out of slavery in Egypt. Joshua's leadership would take the people of Israel into the land of Canaan, where they would build a temple where God's presence would dwell, but where sacrifices for the sins of the people and the priests had to be offered daily. Jesus's perfect and sinless leadership would take the people into the very presence of the throne room of God, where God's presence dwells without the stain of sin.

**The land I am giving the Israelites (v. 2).** From the beginning of God's dealing with Abraham and his descendants, God had always promised that His people would have a place of their own. The land that Joshua was leading the people into would be the culmination of that promise. It was in this land where God would enter the temple of Solomon and where His special presence would dwell. Ultimately, however, God's presence—not the physical land or even the temple where He would dwell—was the most important part of God's promise to Abraham. Some scholars have suggested that being in the presence of God—including "beholding, glorifying, and enjoying" God—is "*the story of the Bible.*"<sup>1</sup> And the purpose of God's presence was to allow the Israelites to have a relationship with Him.

**I will be with you (v. 5).** God was with Moses during every stage of his life and during every phase of his ministry to the people of Israel. Joshua was given an example of what it meant to obey and experience God's presence, and he would now lead as an example of an imperfect but faithful servant who served the Lord. God's promise to be with Joshua as he led the people into the land of promise prefigures Jesus's promise to be with us as we make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:20). God's presence with His people is ultimately seen when the church looks outward and seeks to expand God's kingdom.

## **JOSHUA 1:6-9**

**Connection to The Point:** Obedience to God's Word keeps our faith centered so that we can walk with courage.

**Be strong and courageous (v. 6).** The call to be *strong and courageous* was a common theme in the book of Joshua. In fact, the call to be strong and courageous repeats the words Moses gave to all the people of Israel as he delivered his final sermon before his death outside the promised land (Deut. 31:6). The two ideas are similar but not identical. The manner in

which one is courageous depends on the context. For example, when Joshua and the people of God would be called into conflict with warring neighbors, the idea of strength is most appropriate. When the people were called to keep the law, a more precise translation for the second verb, “courageous,” is probably “resolute” with the idea of firmness. The Christian life is full of opportunities to be courageous, but even more so, the Christian life is a call to resoluteness—standing strong in the midst of cultural and societal pressure to accommodate to worldly norms rather than biblical commands.

**Observe carefully (v. 7).** The strength and courage called for in the previous verse cannot be separated from obedience. Carefully obeying God’s commands is a consistent sign, but never the cause of one’s faith. Throughout the New Testament, we see this same order.

Theologians use grammatical language to refer to this dynamic—the indicative and the imperative. An indicative statement indicates a reality. An imperative is a command. Christ has brought us from death to life. Therefore, Christians are called to act in accordance with their new standing before God (Rom. 6:12-14). Christ cleansed us and made us holy. As a result, Christians are called to live lives that reflect that new reality (1 Thess. 4:3-8). Having crucified the flesh, Christians are called upon to walk according to the Spirit (Gal. 5:16,24). The power for the people of God to obey the imperatives of the Bible comes from the indicative realities that God has created by His own lovingly sovereign power.

**Success (v. 7).** In the case of Joshua and the people of God in this immediate context, the *success* spoken about here is military victory over the people who were living in the land God had promised to Abraham. The people of Israel, having been brought out of slavery in Egypt, were seeking to physically conquer the promised land. God’s promise of success was that they would achieve this military victory as they were obedient to God’s commands. As Christians, the final victory over sin and death has already been won. The death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus has secured our victory over sin and death and has released us from slavery to sin. As those who are united with Christ, we are now called upon to struggle against sin (Heb. 12:4) and to put our sin to death (Col. 3:5).

**This book of instruction (v. 8).** This phrase most likely refers to the Torah—the five books that Moses wrote. Also known as the Pentateuch, the book of instruction is God’s Word for His people and consists of the first five books of our Bible. At this point in the storyline of Scripture, the Torah was the only written revelation of God to His people. By God’s grace, we are in a superior position to the people of God during Joshua’s day. While the people of Joshua’s day had five books, we have the complete Bible—sixty-six books of God’s revelation to us. Additionally, we also have been given the Holy Spirit who illumines the meaning of the entire Bible to us. We also have two thousand years of examples from church history to instruct and inspire us to trust and obey God’s Word.

**Meditate on (v. 8).** The Hebrew word is also found in Psalm 1, where the blessed man is contrasted with the wicked man. The blessed man is described as one who meditates on “the LORD’S instruction . . . day and night” (v. 2). This meditation leads to the blessed man being like a tree that is firmly rooted and therefore bears fruit. Meanwhile the wicked man is like a tree blown away by the wind and will not stand up under judgment (vv. 3-5). *Meditate* also appears in Psalms 63 and 143, where the psalmist reflected on God’s faithfulness to him throughout his life.

Our status before God is not determined by our actions. Only the work of Christ can give us right standing before God. Once we have been united with Christ by faith, we keep in step

with the Spirit as we meditate on His inerrant and perfect Word with the help of the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

## **JOSHUA 1:16-18**

**Connection to The Point:** The Israelites chose to follow the example of Joshua as he obediently followed God.

**Everything you have commanded (v. 16).** This phrase foreshadows the Great Commission in the Gospel of Matthew. In the Great Commission, Jesus instructed His disciples to make disciples of all nations by teaching them to observe “everything I have commanded you” (28:20). In the book of Joshua, the people of Israel professed they would obey everything Joshua told them to do. As the rest of the Old Testament unfolds, we will see that they did not keep this promise but instead failed to carry out their assignment to conquer the land. One of the many lessons we learn from the Old Testament is that humans cannot obey God in their own power. Only when empowered by the Spirit of God can humans carry out the mission of God. In fact, the disciples who received the Great Commission in Matthew did not obey the command of Jesus until after they received the Holy Spirit in Acts 2.

**We will obey (v. 17).** God tested the people of Israel throughout their time in the wilderness between being rescued from slavery in Egypt and entering the land of promise. From one moment to the next, their commitment was seemingly sincere. However, they were inconsistent and even fickle in their obedience to God. The Lord tested the people of Israel during their time wandering in the wilderness in order to train and instruct them, which gave them an opportunity to know the Lord as their God. That testing and training now benefits us as ones who have been given the whole counsel of God. As Paul wrote, “Whatever was written in the past was written for our instruction, so that we may have hope through endurance and through the encouragement from the Scriptures” (Rom. 15:4).

**Just as we obeyed Moses (v. 17).** The Israelites’ promise to obey Joshua *just as* they had obeyed Moses might have been sincere, but it also rings hollow. The promise to obey as they obeyed Moses comes with a sense of irony. As a matter of fact, the people who were rescued from slavery in Egypt by God through Moses frequently did not obey Moses. As a result of their disobedience, they were not allowed to enter the promised land.

**As he was with Moses (v. 17).** God’s people should take comfort in God’s presence with them. Such people are reassured not by their own abilities or power but by the presence of God with them. God’s power and presence was what motivated and permitted the people of Joshua’s day to carry out the mission God had given them to conquer the land He had promised to Abraham.

**Be put to death (v. 18).** After initially having military victory in the city of Jericho as they first entered the promised land (chapter 6), the Israelites were defeated when they attempted to conquer the town of Ai (chapter 7). They were defeated at Ai due to the sin of one man named Achan and his family. Instead of bringing the devoted things to Joshua to be put in the treasury of the Lord, Achan kept some of these things for himself. The result of this one man’s disobedience was the defeat of the entire army of the people of God. Only after Achan and his family were stoned to death did the people of Israel conquer Ai. While this kind of activity is shocking to modern readers, Achan’s disobedience and subsequent death served as a warning and as an act of discipline to God’s people. The Lord disciplines His people out of His

love for them (Prov. 3:12; Heb. 12:6). Whenever the Lord disciplines us, He does so for our benefit that we might grow in holiness. To grow in holiness is to grow closer to God. By growing in holiness, we grow in joy, because the source of true joy is God Himself.

**Be strong and courageous (v. 18).** By quoting these words to Joshua, the people of Israel were confessing that they were supportive of Joshua as being a legitimate successor to Moses. As we have seen throughout this passage, the people's confession was sincere at the time. However, due to their own sin natures, they did not have the ability to follow through with their commitments. We can never live in holiness in our own power or by relying on works of the law. We can only live righteous lives when we live and walk by faith and not by works (Gal. 3:11).

*"Risk Takers" Bible Studies for Life. LifeWay Press, Summer 2025.*