

***Battles Belong To the Lord: A
Sermon Series from the book
of Joshua***

**“Week 1: Under New
Management”
Joshua Chapter 1**

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Gettysburg, Waterloo, Stalingrad, Battle of Thermopylae, Normandy invasion, Tet offensive, Siege of Bagdad, Battle of Midway, Normandy Invasion, Battle of Little Big Horn, The Alamo, the Siege of Jerusalem...

History is full of battles. For many of these battles, the future of nations were at stake.

Not all battles are fought between nations, though, are they? Individual people face difficult battles almost daily. Our daily battles look very different from the battles nations face. Finances, relationships, illness, the death of loved ones, work related problems, mental health,

addictions, even the memories of past mistakes. We all face battles, and while the future of entire nations may not be at stake, the personal stakes always seem to be high.

This morning, we are beginning a new sermon series in the book of Joshua.

Joshua was called by God to take over as leader of Israel after the death of Moses.

The majority of the book of Joshua is an account of the many battles that Israel faced as they took possession of the land God had promised them. Throughout this book, there is a recurring theme; “Battles Belong to the Lord.”

If you have your Bible with you this morning, please turn to Joshua chapter 1. Once you have found Joshua chapter 1, if you are able, please stand with me for the reading of God’s word.

Joshua 1:1-9

After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, 2 "Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. 3 Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses. 4 From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory. 5 No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you. 6 Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. 7 Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that

Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. 8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

Let's pray

Please be seated.

The book of Joshua picks up where the book of Deuteronomy leaves off.

Deuteronomy means “second law.” The book of Deuteronomy is a retelling by Moses of the story in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers; and it highlights the fact

that God's people need to be obedient to His law.

Through four of the first five books of the Bible, Moses was the main man. Moses was chosen by God to lead the people of Israel out of slavery in Egypt. The book of Exodus begins with an incredible story of God delivering the infant Moses from death when his mother placed him in a woven basket in the Nile river, leading to his adoption by the daughter of the Pharaoh. Moses was raised in the Pharaoh's household, and at the time, would certainly have been the most highly educated of the Hebrew people. However, as a young adult, Moses lost his temper and killed an Egyptian task master; and as a result, he became a fugitive in the wilderness.

Years later, as Moses was tending livestock, he stumbled upon a bush that burned but wasn't consumed. Through the

burning bush, God spoke to Moses and called him to be the liberator and shepherd of the Hebrew people.

This calling meant facing his past by returning to Egypt, and it also meant Moses would have to make huge demands of the most powerful monarch in the land, the Pharaoh of Egypt who thought of himself as both emperor and god.

The Lord guided Moses through a series of plagues, designed to convince the Pharaoh to release the Hebrews. God's people escaped Egypt and set off on a wilderness journey that would lead them to question Moses and the Lord. In fact, there were many times when the people grumbled and commented that slavery in Egypt was preferable to the wilderness wandering.

In spite of their complaining, Moses continued to lead these stubborn people, and God continued to lead Moses.

God performed miracles through Moses to provide food, water, and defense for the people. God instructed Moses, and Moses taught the people the law of God. Moses organized the people, disseminated tasks to different groups for the strength and security of the nation, and established a Tabernacle and the people necessary to care for the Tabernacle. Along the way, Moses trained a few men who would eventually take on leadership duties in his absence.

Joshua was one of those men. Joshua was Moses' right-hand man. He was Moses' second in command. Joshua distinguished himself when Moses sent a band of twelve spies into the promised land, and when the twelve returned, only Joshua and Caleb brought back a positive report. Only Joshua and Caleb believed that God could give the Hebrew people victory over the Canaanites.

Because of their faithfulness, Joshua and Caleb were rewarded with leadership.

Because of their cowardice, the other ten spies and the people who chose to believe them were barred from entering the promised land and would die in the desert.

Due to an earlier act of defiance, Moses was also barred from entering the promised land.

This brings us to Joshua chapter one... and it brings us to the first truth I want us to think about this morning:

1) Leaders are important, but they are also replaceable.

We really should deal with that first truth in two parts... first leaders are important.

I think it's important to first recognize who established Moses as the leader of the Hebrew people. Do you realize that the people didn't choose Moses? They really had no input at all in that decision. God

chose Moses, from birth really, and God orchestrated the events of Moses' life to prepare him for leadership. God wanted a man from among the people, a Hebrew. Moses was a Hebrew. God wanted a man who could navigate the protocols and cultural demands of the Egyptian royal palaces. Who among this nation of slaves would God use to enter the throne room and issue demands to the Pharaoh? Moses grew up in the palace. God wanted a man who was educated enough to write down the story so it would be passed to future generations. Who among this nation of slaves would have the necessary education to write down the record of God's deliverance? Moses was educated by the finest teachers in Egypt. God needed a man who was stubborn enough to lead even the most stubborn people. Moses trained for this job by shepherding sheep. Moses needed a man who was humble

enough to accept God's guidance. Moses was a fugitive, wanted for murder.

When God called Moses, Moses argued with God. Moses told God that he wasn't qualified to lead God's people. Moses tried to remind God that he was a fugitive and couldn't return to Egypt. Moses tried to remind God that he was just a shepherd, unaccustomed to speaking with people. God didn't accept Moses' excuses. God sent Moses to lead the people.

I'll also remind you that the book of Exodus records that approximately 600,000 adult Hebrew men left Egypt with Moses. Probably between 2 and 3 million people in all. There was no election to determine whether the people would follow Moses. There was only a hasty retreat from the territory of Egypt with the threat of death for anyone who stayed behind. No, the people didn't choose their

leader, God chose who would lead His people.

It is also important to remember that Moses led for 40 years, and during that time there were numerous occasions when the majority of the people opposed him. They opposed Moses because the Egyptians were chasing them. They opposed Moses because they were hungry. They opposed Moses because they were thirsty. They opposed Moses because their feet hurt and they were tired of walking. They opposed Moses because they were tired of eating bread. They opposed Moses because they thought his spiritual retreat was too long when he went up the mountain to meet with God and receive the law. These people opposed Moses at every turn. They tried to vote him out. They tried to run him off. The only thing they didn't do was try to kill him.

Can you imagine what those disgruntled conversations must have sounded like? How often did the people remind each other that Moses was a murderer and a fugitive? How often did they complain that he just thought he was better than them because he grew up in the palace? How many times were Moses' credentials and credibility challenged and insulted because he was educated in the house of Pharoah? I imagine that the people used all the same reasons to question Moses' fitness as a leader that Moses used when he was standing at the burning bush trying to convince God to send someone else. Over and over the people were convinced that Moses was the wrong man to lead them, and I'm sure that over and over Moses was the most convinced of all. Yet, God called Moses; and God used Moses. Was Moses perfect? No. Far from it. Yet, God called Moses; and God used Moses.

Listen carefully... God choses to use people to lead people. One thing that all people have in common... none of them are perfect. All people are broken. All people have personality flaws. All people have pet sins. All people have past mistakes. Yet, God choses to use people to lead people.

As long as Moses was God's chosen leader for the people, Moses was indispensable. His leadership was vital.

Do you know how long God chose to use Moses? Until Moses died...

Isn't that interesting? I find it interesting how quickly churches and organizations move to disqualify and dismiss leaders. Did you know that Moses made mistakes as a leader? In fact, Moses was barred from entering the promised land because of an act of public and blatant defiance toward God. Moses lost out on the joy of seeing the dream fulfilled. Moses lost out

seeing the completion of the project. However, Moses was not removed from leadership. In fact, he remained in leadership for many, many more years. The best part of his ministry to God's people came after that incident.

God chooses who will lead His people. God chooses how long the leader will lead. And, as we can see in Joshua chapter 1, God passes the mantle of responsibility to the next generation of leaders. **Leaders are important, but they are also replaceable.** Just remember that it should always be God who does the replacing.

Let's look back at verses 1-4:

After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, 2 "Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people,

into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. 3 Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses. 4 From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory.

This brings us to the second truth I want us to see this morning:

2) Often, the promises of God outlive us.

What do I mean by that? Well, in this case, Joshua 1:3-4 are a word for word repetition of a promise that God spoke to Moses in Deuteronomy chapter 11. In Joshua 1:3-4, God takes the promise that He gave to Moses, and He passes that promise down to Joshua.

What does that mean for Joshua? Well, it would have been clear to Joshua and to the Hebrew people that by passing the promise of Moses to Joshua, God was ordaining Joshua as a second Moses; or a fulfillment of the promises that God gave to Moses. For Joshua, this is a great thing. He is going to get to lead the people into great victories that they have worked for and waited for so long.

What does this mean for Moses? Well, it means that the promises God made to Moses will still be kept. God is faithful and will keep every promise. However, in Moses' case, he doesn't live to physically see the fulfillment of the promise.

It is important for us to understand that God is on a different timeline than we are. We see everything through the filter of a 100 year timeline, and that is optimistic. Everything we have ever completed has been done in less than 100 years... usually

far less. We struggle to comprehend the importance of things that took place before we were born; and often, we fail to see the importance of things that will happen after we die. Sometimes living in the moment is practical; other times, living only for the moment is selfish.

We often fail to see things from an eternal perspective. Most of what God has accomplished was done long before you were born. Much of what He will accomplish will be completed after your death. Moses spent his life leading God's people toward a goal that would not be accomplished until after Moses died. Did that make Moses a failure? By no means. Moses was called to follow God; and Moses followed God. Moses was called to lead God's people; and Moses led God's people. Moses' leadership was instrumental in the fulfillment of God's promise to Israel.

It is important for us to realize that God often asks us to do things that won't be completed during our lifetime. He asks us to construct the foundation that a future generation will build upon. He promises that His plans are good. He has not promised you or I that we will live to see the completion of any given plan.

- 1) God's chosen leaders are important, but also replaceable.
- 2) Often, the promises of God will outlive us.

The third truth I want us to think about this morning is:

- 3) If we follow God, we don't need to fear any man.

Look at verses 5-9, these are some wonderfully encouraging verses:

5 No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will

*not leave you or forsake you. 6 **Be strong and courageous**, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. 7 Only **be strong and very courageous**, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. 8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. 9 Have I not commanded you? **Be strong and courageous**. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”*

I love this passage...

Do you understand what is going on here? God speaks to Joshua. God says, “Joshua, your mentor is dead, and now you are going to lead the people of God.” “Joshua, you are going to be just like Moses, only, you are going to lead the people into battle.”

I need you to understand something about this passage. In this passage, God isn’t just ordaining a spiritual leader. In this passage, God is commissioning a General. Joshua will continue to be a spiritual leader like Moses, but Joshua will be something more. Joshua will be a warrior. Joshua will be a warrior who leads warriors.

Now, I spent a lot of years in the Army, and I’ve seen a couple of Generals take command during my time in service. Usually, before a General takes command, there is a great deal of training. They train

in military history, sciences of war, tactics, leadership strategy...

They train in physical fitness and combat skills, just like any other soldier...

When they take command, there is a huge ceremony. All of the troops are arrayed on a parade field for inspection. The weapons and equipment are put on display...

This commissioning looked a little different.

During this commissioning, God made Joshua's job very clear. Joshua was to follow God. Joshua was to obey all of God's law. God told Joshua to teach the people the words of the law and to be very careful that they obeyed God's word.

Three times, God gave the same refrain "Be strong and courageous." "Be strong and courageous." "Be strong and courageous."

You know what I find interesting? All of this encouragement to be strong and courageous had nothing to do with the military battles that Joshua would lead his people into. God was encouraging Joshua, over and over again, to be a strong and courageous spiritual leader. God was commanding Joshua to courageously demand that the people obey God's law. God promised Joshua, that if Joshua would learn the law, obey the law, teach the law, and enforce the law; God would not allow any man to stand against him.

- 1) God's chosen leaders are important, but also replaceable.
- 2) Often, the promises of God will outlive us.
- 3) If we follow God, we don't need to fear any man.

Our fourth and final truth from the text this morning is this:

- 4) Victory requires obedience.

Let's read Joshua 1:10-18

10 And Joshua commanded the officers of the people, 11 "Pass through the midst of the camp and command the people, 'Prepare your provisions, for within three days you are to pass over this Jordan to go in to take possession of the land that the Lord your God is giving you to possess.'"

12 And to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh Joshua said, 13 "Remember the word that Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, saying, 'The Lord your God is providing you a place of rest and will give you this land.' 14 Your wives, your little ones, and your livestock shall remain in the land that Moses gave you beyond the Jordan, but all the men of valor among you shall pass over armed before your brothers and shall help them, 15 until the Lord gives rest to your brothers as he has to you,

and they also take possession of the land that the Lord your God is giving them. Then you shall return to the land of your possession and shall possess it, the land that Moses the servant of the Lord gave you beyond the Jordan toward the sunrise.”

16 And they answered Joshua, “All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. 17 Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you. Only may the Lord your God be with you, as he was with Moses! 18 Whoever rebels against your commandment and disobeys your words, whatever you command him, shall be put to death. Only be strong and courageous.”

Joshua didn't argue with God like his predecessor Moses did when God called him to lead the people. Instead, in verse 10 we see that Joshua went out and took

command of the people. Once again, there were several million people, but there was no election, no coup, no mention of dissent. God chose His leader, and sent him out to the people.

Joshua did not make any long speeches, or have everybody line up for inspection.

Joshua simply issued his first orders.

“Prepare yourselves, because in three days we will enter Canaan and begin possessing the land.”

The people answered Joshua by saying that they would obey his commands, and they would require complete obedience from every person, under penalty of death.

Did Joshua tell the people that the mission required complete obedience? Nope. The people already understood that. They understood that the reason Moses could not lead them into Canaan was because of disobedience. They understood that the reason an entire generation of Israelites

had to die in the wilderness was disobedience and lack of faith. They understood that the disobedience of one person would be held against the entire nation. They understood that the fulfillment of the promise was based on their obedience.

Four truths in this text this morning:

- 1) God's chosen leaders are important, but also replaceable.**
- 2) Often, the promises of God will outlive us.**
- 3) If we follow God, we don't need to fear any man.**
- 4) Victory requires obedience.**

These things were true for the Hebrew people in the wilderness of Sinai, and they are still true for us today.

God calls and equips leaders. He demands that His leaders lead. He demands that His people follow.

God promises good things to those who serve Him, but we won't always see the completion of the promises. It is enough to know that God is working, and that He was gracious enough to use us in His plan. We should approach everything in life as an opportunity to do our best work for God. We are laying a foundation for future generations of Christians.

If we follow God, we don't need to fear anything. God hasn't promised that everything will be easy, or that it will be fun, or comfortable; but He has promised that His work is good. We can be confident in the fact that God is bigger than the battles we face.

Finally, victory requires obedience. We really struggle with this one. We sometimes feel like God owes us all the

good stuff; but we don't feel like we owe Him our complete obedience. Yes, we obey some of the time on some of the things; but we spend an awful lot of time and energy in disobedience and rebellion. Have you ever stopped to think how much better your life might be if you were just more obedient to God?

Over the next several weeks, we will follow Joshua through the conquest of Canaan. We will see the results of faithful obedience, and we will see the consequences of even small deviations from God's instruction. As God's children, we will see that we are called to follow God, and our battles belong to the Lord!

Let's pray