

Week 1, Joshua 1

Hook



Main Point: Strength and courage are found in God's presence.

Current Event: The film *Jaws* celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2015. The movie cost about \$7 million to make and, since its initial release, has produced more than \$500 million in ticket sales.¹ The suspenseful story preyed on the fears of beachgoers; some have even linked the film to a significant decrease in beach attendance in 1975.² For a beast that caused such a great deal of fear in moviegoers, the great white shark was given only four minutes of screen time. Many who have seen the film are now terrified of sharks; statistics, however, indicate that sharks might be the least of our worries. According to *The Washington Post*, the average animal-caused fatalities in the U.S. between 2001 and 2013 are:

Sharks – kill 1 person a year

Alligators – kill 1 person a year

Bears – kill 1 person a year

Spiders – kill 7 person a year

Dogs – kill 28 people a year

Cows – kill 20 people a year

Bees, wasps and hornets – kill 58 people a year³

¹ <http://www.cnn.com/2010/SHOWBIZ/Movies/06/29/jaws.anniversary/>

² <http://abcnews.go.com/Entertainment/jaws-launched-summer-blockbuster-35-years-ago/story?id=10855868>

³ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2015/06/16/chart-the-animals-that-are-most-likely-to-kill-you-this-summer/>

Discussion Questions:

Has a film ever caused you to have an irrational fear?

What is it about the movie Jaws that made the shark seem so frightening?

How have you conquered fears in the past?

Joshua 1

Book

Main Point: Strength and courage are found in God's presence.

Text Summary: Israel stood ready at the river Jordan along the border of the Promised Land. Their readiness was not only evidenced by their physical posture, but by the posture of their hearts under their new leader, Joshua. Joshua is commissioned by Moses, encouraged by the LORD, and respected by the people because he hears God's decree, believes and obeys.

Joshua 1:1–9 (Read)

Sub Point: God tasks and equips His people.

The book opens with Joshua in the middle of a major career shift. All he had known to date was to serve Moses as his second in command (Numbers 11:21). Together the two had:

- *Battled and defeated the Amalekites (Exodus 17:8–16).* This is the first appearance of Joshua in the Bible and a picture of God's willingness and ability to provide victory for His people. Moses was tasked with holding his staff over his head with both hands (a symbol of Israel's dependence on God) and Joshua was given the responsibility of leading the army into battle (demonstrating the nation's willingness to move in faith). Both Moses and Joshua fulfilled their requirements and the LORD provided the victory. God instructed Moses to record and read the account of the happenings of that day to Joshua, reminding him that the battle belonged to the Lord.⁴
- *Climbed Mount Sinai to receive the Ten Commandments (Exodus 24:13, 32:17).* Joshua accompanied Moses up at least a portion of the mountain.
- *Entered the Tent of Meeting (Exodus 33:7–11).* When Moses would enter the tent, a pillar of cloud would reside over it. There, Moses would meet with God. When Moses left the tent, Joshua would remain in it.

Joshua was the clear candidate to take Moses' mantle; an observation that was confirmed by God in Numbers 27:18–33. The LORD had appointed Joshua as leader; Moses had officially commissioned him before the people of Israel as the new head of state but in Joshua 1 it appears that he is faltering. Everything about Joshua was so entwined with Moses and now Joshua is on his own. The man is afraid.

As Joshua mourns and waits, God speaks to him. In this monologue, God provides three things:

⁴ Crossway Bibles, *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2008), 394.

1. A reality check. The LORD’s first words were not of solace or even recognition that Joshua is hurting. Instead, He states:

“Moses my servant is dead” (Joshua 1:2).

There you have it. Moses is dead. Thankfully, this was not the end of the speech:

“Arise! Cross the Jordan and take the land I am giving to you.”

The LORD helps Joshua to see two things: one season has passed and another is waiting to begin. God did not degrade Moses or discount the value of Joshua’s time as his second in command. However, that wonderful period of life had passed and there is now a new work to be done. Joshua could not remain huddled over the body of Moses *and* lead the people. Moses’ purpose was fulfilled and he is now at rest but Joshua is still present; when one of God’s people is present, he also is purposed.

2. Comfort through promises. The conversation continues in verse 3 as God begins to comfort Joshua with three promises.

- *Everywhere Joshua steps in the Promised Land has been given to Israel (v. 3).*
- *Specific land would belong to Israel (vv. 3–4).*
- *God would provide victory over enemies (v. 5).*

3. A job description. God had confronted Joshua with reality, comforted him with promises, and in verse 6, He challenges the new leader with criteria for his new position. Like most jobs, Joshua needed a particular attitude, he would be required to accomplish tasks and would be provided with tools to get things done.

Verses	Attitude	Task	Tools Available
6	Be strong and courageous	To lead the Israelites into the Promised Land and battle	God’s promise that He would provide victory
7–8	Be strong and very courageous	Obey the Scriptures	Power found in God’s Word
9	Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous	Refuse to be afraid or dismayed	God’s presence

Joshua certainly has a job to do. But notice that the LORD begins and ends the details of Joshua's assignments with a promise of His presence (vv. 5, 9). Every Christ-follower is tasked with work to accomplish. But no matter how daunting the task, God's presence is enough. Where the Lord goes, He brings His power and provision.

How does someone mourn loss (of a loved one, a job, a season of life, etc.) and continue to accomplish his or her purpose?

Describe a time of transition that you experienced in your life. What did God teach you in your season of change?

The word "meditate" in verse 8 means "to mutter" in the Hebrew. What role does quoting and discussing the Scriptures play in becoming a mature believer?

In what ways does Scripture provide courage? What verses have you memorized to fight fear?

Joshua 1:10–18 (Read)

Sub Point: The correct response to God's direction is obedience.

God has spoken to Joshua and Joshua immediately obeys. The leader communicates words of certainty: The people would take possession of the land. His directive to Israel is clear: Prepare provisions; we are going in.

Joshua gets specific with the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh in verses 12–15; these tribes had already taken their inheritance on the east side of the Jordan. They had requested the land and were granted it by Moses with one condition: They must fight for their brothers (the tribes that would settle west of Jordan) when the time came. Not only would the Reubenites, Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh be required to fight, they were to be on the front lines (Numbers 32:16–32; Deuteronomy 3:12–20). Now Joshua is tasked with reminding/motivating this group to fulfill the promises made. His instructions are rich with meaning:

- 1. Unity Is Imperative.** These tribes settled in land east of the Jordan during Moses' time with the stipulation that they fight as one with Israel when entering the land of Canaan (Numbers 32:20–28). Joshua called on these men to fulfill their commitment because solidarity is key to victory.
- 2. Peace Is the Goal.** The men are called on to fight until peace is achieved. Then they can return to their wives, children and livestock. This underlies the ultimate goal of conquest as rest from war so that Israel could serve her God: *"The LORD your God is providing you a place of rest and will give you this land" (1:13).*

- 3. Honor Is Empowering.** The men were called to obey the Word of the Lord in honor. Honor inspires obedience by way of dignity, rather than fear and punishment. Joshua communicated respectfully with these “men of valor” (1:14) and they responded in kind: *“All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go”* (1:16).

These tribes were facing a daunting task. Acting as shock troops for Israel, they would be risking their lives for their brothers’ inheritance. One might expect a list of excuses as to why the men could not fulfill their obligation or even perhaps a rebellion reminiscent of Numbers 14. Instead, the men confirmed that they would whole-heartedly fulfill their obligation.

They vowed allegiance to Joshua and exhorted him to be strong and courageous. However, they were following the man with the expectation that the Lord would be with him; Joshua, without God, was of no value. With enthusiasm, the people are prepared to march. The time has come to cross the threshold into the Promised Land.

Compare the attitude of the Israelites while in the desert and now in Joshua 1. What do you think accounted for the shift?

What are some ways to keep a group unified (be it a church, Bible Fellowship, family, etc.)?

What long-term promises have you made to God? What has helped you to keep the fulfillment of those promises a priority?

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Took



Main Point: Strength and courage are found in God's presence.

In Today's Culture: Fear was no stranger to George Lucas. While filming *Star Wars* (1977), Lucas was terrified that he had made a mistake. He was concerned that the film had become nothing more than a movie for children, falling short of the director's vision. To help regain composure, Lucas visited his friend Steven Spielberg on the set of a movie that he was filming, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. Lucas was incredibly impressed with Spielberg's work on set, and he proposed a bet. Spielberg recalls the conversation between the two directors:

"Your movie is going to be so much more successful than Star Wars! This is gonna be the biggest hit of all time. I can't believe this set. I can't believe what you're getting, and oh my goodness." He (Lucas) said, 'All right, I'll tell you what. I'll trade some points with you. You want to trade some points? I'll give you 2.5 percent of Star Wars if you give me 2.5 percent of Close Encounters.' So I said, 'Sure, I'll gamble with that. Great.'"

Although *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* does well in theaters, it pales in comparison to *Star Wars*. Lucas' film has \$1.48 billion in the box office (adjusted for inflation). Spielberg continues:

"Close Encounters was just a meager success story. Star Wars was a phenomenon," Spielberg said.... "Of course I was the happy beneficiary of a couple of net points from that movie, which I am still seeing money on today."⁵

In the moment, fear can cause a lapse in perspective. If the bet was strictly adhered to, that would mean \$40 million dollars for Spielberg.

Lesson Conclusion: Today's lesson reminds the believer that courage can be found in God's presence, promises and Word.

⁵ <http://www.businessinsider.com/george-lucas-star-wars-bet-made-steven-spielberg-millions-2014-3>

Challenge:

Fight fear with the reality of God's presence. The writer of Hebrews (13:5–6) quotes the book of Joshua to remind every New Testament believer that God's presence remains our source of help and courage:

"...he (God) has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' So we can confidently say, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?'"

You are not alone. In times of fear and discouragement, remember that God is with you, providing His strength.

Rise up. Joshua was experiencing grief to the point of immobility concerning his new reality. Sorrow over the passing of a season is completely normal and even healthy. And at some point, God will call the grieving to a new task. Joshua would never forget Moses and certainly would continue to feel sadness over the loss of his mentor but Joshua could not remain still. God had a plan for Joshua. As you experience grief, remember that if God has you on Earth as a presence, He has you on Earth for a purpose. Rise up and be obedient even in the midst of grief.

Meet change with optimism and resolve. Moses had passed but God's will marched on. When God moves you into a new area or tasks you with a new challenge, face it with an expectancy of great things. Israel witnessed incredible wonders under the leadership of Moses and it would witness even more incredible things under the leadership of Joshua. Recognize that life occurs in seasons. Do not allow your fondness of the last season to taint your perception of the new season. Dragging your feet through change may rob you of the blessings that God wants to provide you in your new situation.