



Writing Life Faith



For His Glory: Joshua

The Life of Joshua.

"After the death of Moses the LORD's servant, the LORD spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' assistant. He said, 'Moses my servant is dead. Therefore, the time has come for you to lead these people, the Israelites, across the Jordan River into the land I am giving them.'" (Joshua 1:1-2)

Let's talk about courage.

I feel like starting with one of my younger self's favourite genres of writing: *Choose Your Own Adventure*. In today's edition, you, dear reader, are the main character. Welcome to your paragraph-long career as an NFL player.

Choose Your Own Adventure...

You and your teammates are playing in the championship game. You have spent an entire season readying yourself for this moment. Glancing sideways at the clock, you set your jaw in determination. 0:03 remains in the fourth quarter. The enemy leads by 5 points. Your feet dig into the turf as you break huddle. You line up three feet behind the Quarterback. For the final play, you will receive a handoff. All that stands between you and the trophy are six feet of turf...and a ton of giant opposing linemen. You can hear your coach on the sideline: "You have earned this. Did I not promise you a championship if you followed my program?" Your lineman snaps the ball, the QB hands it off...and you are left with a choice. If you push through into the end zone, turn to Numbers 13:30. If you turn around and book it towards the sideline, turn to Numbers 13:31.

I hope this sounds as silly to you as it does to me. And yet, when the Twelve Scouts in *Numbers 13* faced the same ultimatum, ten chose the latter, and only two picked the former.

Due to their cowardice, Israel wandered in the wilderness for forty years. Only two men from the original generation survived: Caleb son of Jephunneh [Judah] and Joshua (aka Hoshua) son of Nun [Ephraim]. Today we're learning about the second man, who happens to be the first Biblical character with a book named after him.

Joshua

Joshua's Actions.

When the Twelve Scouts enter Canaan, Joshua is one of only two who believe God's promise. God swore to give them the land. Therefore, if Israel had followed through, they would've received it. They did not follow through.

I took three things away from this chapter. First, God fulfills His promises *when we act*. If we disobey, we limit what God can do in our lives. Second, doing the right thing often means voicing an unpopular opinion. Third - and this is a hard one - even if we speak truth, people may not listen.

Joshua's Attitude.

Moses appoints Joshua as the leader of Israel prior to entering the promised land. God then speaks to Joshua, commanding him to take the people to the land. Many times, God tells Joshua to be strong and courageous. Joshua 1:5 says, *"No one will be able to stand against you as long as you live. For I will be with you as I was with Moses. I will not fail you or abandon you."*

Joshua follows through. He first sends spies to scout the land, and this time, their report is favourable. The people cross the Jordan River, the water parting before them.

Now don't skip the next part. Jumping straight from crossing the Jordan to marching around Jericho would cause us to miss two important events. To begin, Joshua reestablishes covenant ceremonies by circumcising the second generation of freed Israelites. I won't go into detail, because that's beside the point. The crux of the matter is obedience. **God asks for obedience followed by action, not the other way around.**

Joshua also casually meets the LORD's commander (who may well have been Jesus pre-incarnate). Joshua asks Him if He's for them or their enemies, to which He replies, *"Neither one. I am the commander of the LORD's armies"* (Joshua 5:14). I understand the following is a technicality, but we err by saying, "God's on my side." We ought to say, "I'm on God's side."

Joshua falls face down on the ground in reverence, committing himself to God's command. After this meeting, he receives bizarre instructions that sound more like an exercise program than a battle plan.

Joshua's Affliction.

The LORD commands Joshua to march around Jericho once a day for six days, with the priests leading the way. On the seventh day, they're to walk around the city seven times. Finally, they should all shout, whereupon the walls will collapse.

Joshua faces another test. Will he be bold and obey God? **Obedience when we understand is easy; true obedience is following God when we don't understand.** Interestingly, God's plan seems to involve far less work and way less bloodshed than the conventional method. Naaman the Leper's story is akin to this; God looked for obedience, not heroics. Obedience is the hard part. The action is relatively easy, in comparison.

God never told us to be heroes. He commanded us to be courageous and obedient. Here's a short testimony from one of my fellow camp Staff to further illustrate this.

"During July, I really struggled with overthinking and stress about the future. I kept worrying about what was going to happen to me and what my life would look like, and it felt like my mind was constantly running. There was one moment during worship when I became really overwhelmed with emotion. I ended up going to someone I trusted, and we talked and prayed together. In that moment, I felt such a huge sense of relief. I remember feeling this peace in my body that I hadn't had for a while. Looking back, I really feel like I saw God working in me through that moment. He reminded me that I don't have to have everything figured out and that I can trust Him with my future. It was such a simple moment, but it meant a lot to me, and I could genuinely feel God bringing me peace."

Joshua's Answer.

So Joshua obeys God's instruction. Each day, the people march around Jericho. It must have been a sight to see. From the city, the citizens probably laughed. What was Israel playing at? They marched for 7 days. On day 7, the priests blew the horn, and the people shouted at the top of their voices.

Then the walls came tumbling down. Israel plunders the city without a single loss of life on their side. (Rahab and her family are the only survivors.)

Joshua's Aftermath.

Joshua leads the people in a glorious conquest of the promised land. They mess up, naturally, but God shows mercy. Day by day, Israel wins their battles against the enemy nations. In total, Joshua defeats thirty-one enemy kings. The land finally receives the judgment it deserved. For four hundred years the people of Canaan lived in sin. Joshua set the record straight.

When the conquest is complete, Joshua allots land to the tribes. He also gets first pick for where he wants to live. Unlike Moses, Joshua stays utterly faithful until the end. **Joshua saw God's plans through to completion.** He lives to the age of 110, and his final words to the people are recorded as follows: *"Destroy the idols among you, and turn your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel"* (Joshua 24:23). The people promise they'll do it.

Our Application.

Jumping back to the *Choose Your Own Adventure*, the choice now rests in your hands. Walk in step with God's plan and accept His promises or give in to fear and follow your way. I won't deny God's plan involves sacrifice. Of course it will cost us something. I only pray He'll continue to transform us into people who want to live for His glory.

Besides, the hardest part of "doing hard things" happens before we do anything. Obedience is the most difficult thing. Master that and you're set. Then act courageously, because that is God's command.

Here's our reflection question.

***Where is God asking you to obey Him?
How can you take a step of obedience today, and this week?***

Next time, we'll shift from Joshua to Judges as we study the life of Ruth the Moabite. In a series first, we'll cover a non-Israelite.

As God said to Joshua in 1:8-9... *"Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do. This is My command: be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."*



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