

Be Strong & Courageous

May 31, 2020



Daily Devotions

Day One // The story so far...

Read Joshua 1:1-5.

The book of Joshua continues the journey of God's people into the Promised Land.

The story began by God choosing Abraham and his family as the ones who would become representatives on God's behalf to all the peoples of the earth showcasing God's beauty, goodness, and truth. Abraham's family turned into the nation of Israel but wind up enslaved in Egypt. God saw and heard their suffering, so he did something about it.

Through Moses, God rescued Israel from slavery, made a promise with them at Mt. Sinai, and led them through the wilderness where they camped, waiting to enter into the Promised Land. This is where the book of Joshua picks up.

For a more detailed overview of this story, be sure to check out <https://bibleproject.com/>.

Israel feels ready, but at the same time they've got some obstacles in the way (foreign armies, fear, anxiety, and worry to name a few!)

Joshua is a book where God's people face unprecedented challenges with courage and hope, learn the value of obedience and holiness, learn to trust the Lord, recognize God's provision and hand in their lives, learn that God fights for them, and ultimately where God's people take new ground.

As we dive deeper into this story, here are a few questions to consider:

- The story of Joshua is a continuation of Israel's story. Before you consider the new ground the Lord may be inviting you to take in your own life, how would you describe your story so far? How might your story so far impact your story moving forward?
- When you think of recent events (COVID-19, etc.), in what ways might the enemy have taken new ground in your own life?
- In what ways or areas of your life do you feel God might be inviting you to take ground in? What makes you think that?

Day Two // Promises fulfilled

It's easy to miss, but in **Joshua 1:3** the LORD says to Joshua, "Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, *just as I promised to Moses.*"

Israel's voyage into the Promised Land wasn't just the result of their military ability or because they wanted that specific land *really* bad. It was a direct result of what God wanted them to do (**see Exodus 5:22-6:12**).

Often times it can be tricky to discern between what new ground we want to take versus new ground that God wants us to take. Our desires tend to cloud those waters.

One of the ways in which we can make clear where God might be inviting us to take new ground is to first check our own motivations, but to also remember and align ourselves with God's promises.

We do this by searching the Scriptures and asking prayerfully what God is up to in our world today. Then, instead of trying to get God to be a part of *our* plan, we join him in what he is already doing.

There's more that could be said about that process, but for now reflect on the questions below:

- Place yourself in the shoes of an Israelite at this point in the story. You've been wandering in the wilderness. You've known about God's promise to enter the Promised Land and now it looks like that promise is going to be fulfilled. What feelings would you have? What kinds of conversations would you be having with your family and friends?
- As you continue thinking about the new ground that God is inviting you to take or the ground he wants to take in your own life, how do you discern between your own motivations and recognizing what God might actually be inviting you into? How might considering God's promises about his plans for followers of Jesus inform this process?
- Many times, people move forward in taking new ground because they move, not out of the promises God has made to them, but out of the promises they have made to God. Have you ever promised God that you would or would not do something? Are those promises spiritually healthy?

Day Three // Be strong and courageous

Some people are very change-averse in life, while others *love* change. Some people will move from place to place, others will live in one town their whole life. Some people will change their living room around, while others will never even think about moving their recliner! Some people will eat the same general foods week in and week out, while others will never eat at the same restaurant more than once.

Change can be hard, but it can be *especially* hard when we think it might jeopardize any sense of security we hold. If change in our life would seemingly endanger our physical safety, our relationships, our finances, et al. then it becomes a lot harder for us to move forward with any sort of alterations in our lives.

For us to make a change, there has to either be a larger goal in mind, a sense of security that transcends our immediate fears, or the pain of staying the same has to be greater than actually changing itself.

For the Israelites, a change was coming. For 40 years, they wandered in the wilderness. Now, they were to enter the Promised Land. And it wasn't like it was uninhabited. It was populated with Israel's enemies – people with established fortresses, systems for food and water distribution, and a working knowledge of the terrain. God's people had none of that.

For them to take new ground, they had to know a sense of security that transcended their immediate fears. That is exactly what God tells them three times in chapter one. He tells them to be “strong and courageous.”

Read Joshua 1:6-9 and consider the following questions:

- When you think about the established people groups that Israel would have to face in the Promised Land, what thoughts or feelings do you think they had when they suddenly realized their time in the wilderness was up and they were in for a drastic change?
- When it comes to taking new ground for the Lord, which of the above reasons for why people move forward with change resonate with you the most? What are some reasons you might be hesitant to move forward with change in your life?
- What areas in your own life do you need to hear God speak over you, “Be strong and courageous?”

Day Four // Holy preparation

When we move, we prepare by packing our boxes. When go on vacation, we prepare by packing our bags. When we diet, we prepare by meal-prepping. Any significant change in our life, we know, is preceded by preparation.

The same is true for any new ground that God may be inviting us to take.

When God told the Israelites that it was time for them to enter the Promised Land, he didn't expect them to do it without first doing some planning and organizing. In **Joshua 1:10-11**, Joshua tells the people to, "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."

As God's people today, we want to faithfully take new ground for Jesus and his kingdom – in our own hearts and in our own world. We want to see evil and sin and hate and injustice brought to an end. We want to see, as Jesus says, "Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (**Matthew 6:10**).

But moving forward in faith doesn't mean we do so blindly or tactlessly. Faith is not opposed to wisdom.

- When you think about how you typically move forward with a decision, how would you describe your ability to come to that decision? Is it fast or slow? Do you tend to jump into a decision or overthink it? What may be an example of this in your life?
- When was a time you moved too quickly on something God was inviting you into? When was a time you moved too slowly? What happened? What did you learn from those experiences?
- In what ways does allowing God to take new ground in your own life or joining God in taking new ground in our world require holy preparation on your part? What practical steps of preparation are you pursuing right now?

Day Five // Obedience

The great American preacher Jonathan Edwards once wrote seventy resolutions that he hoped would guide him throughout his life. His first resolution tells us a lot about how he saw his life in relation to God. In resolution one, Edwards writes, “*Resolved*, That I will do whatsoever I think to be most to the glory of God...” no matter the “difficulties I meet with, how many soever, and how great soever.”

Translation: Jonathan Edwards resolved to be obedient to the Lord so matter what.

His resolution seems similar to what the Israelites resolve to do in **Joshua 1:16-18**. Here, the Israelites resolve to follow the command of Joshua. They tell him whatever he commands, they will do. Wherever Joshua goes, they will follow.

This wasn't just blind obedience to a leader. The Israelites did this because they knew that Joshua's leadership was a direct representation of God's leadership in their life.

Many times in our lives, the thing that gets in the way of taking new ground is our own disobedience. We know what God wants us to do, but we don't do it. And while we can acknowledge the promises of God, and we can prepare night and day, there will come a time when the rubber meets the road and we have to actually *move*.

The Israelites were ready to move in faith and obedience to the living God – no matter what. They had seen God's faithfulness in the past and now they were ready for God to move again.

As we wrap up this first week of our study of Joshua, here are a couple of reflection questions.

- When was the last time you consciously moved out of obedience to God? When was the last time you were consciously disobedient to God?
- How have you seen your own disobedience prevent you from taking new ground for the Lord? In what ways has your disobedience actually given ground to the enemy?
- What disobedience exists in your life that you need to confess and turn from right now?