

How God Makes Men

Joshua: the principle of mission success

Joshua 1:1-9

Good morning, men! Today we're going to hop back into the series *How God Makes Men* and look at the lives of 10 more Biblical characters. You would not be in this category, but a lot of men would think of these Bible heroes, these famous men of the Bible as these guys with long beards and longer robes riding around on camels that really don't have anything relevant to say to men today. But of course, nothing could be further from the truth. There are timeless principles involved in these scriptures, and so we're going to take a look at one of those this morning. We're going to look at the life of Joshua.

Before we do that, let's do a shout out to a group called Man Up. They meet on Saturdays at 7:00am at Cypress Point Community Church just north of Tampa. Rus Adams is the leader, and they are doing the Man Alive series. So I wonder if you would join me in giving a very warm welcome to Man Up? One, two, three, hoorah! Welcome guys, we're glad to have you with us!

So the title of the message today is *Joshua: the principle of mission success*. God has a mission for your life! You may know what this is or you may not know what this is, or you may be in a state of confusion about what it is. You may be succeeding in this mission, or you may be experiencing a setback. You may not be so sure anymore that you even heard God rightly in the first place. That's because every mission is hard. God wants you to succeed and prosper. He does! The purpose why the Holy Spirit has included this particular story about Joshua in the Bible is so that you will have reasonable grounds to believe that you will be successful, that you can be courageous, that you will be infused with bravery and strength, and courage. So let's take a look at this passage today. Truth is your friend. Joshua 1.

Joshua and His Mission

First, let's look at Joshua and his mission. Beginning at verse 1:

After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide:

Here's the situation. They are standing at the edge of the Jordan River on the wilderness side. Moses has lead the people through the wilderness for forty years. Deuteronomy 1:2 says it takes 11 days to get from Egypt to the Promised Land. We all know because of the disobedience of the Israelites that they had this 40 year wilderness experience and Joshua has been Moses's aid during these days. Joshua has seen the parting of the red sea. He was 40 years of age when they left, and we're picking him up at about 80 years of age today. He's seen the mana fall from heaven. He led the Israelites out to defeat the Malachites. He's been mentored by Moses. He's seen the miracles that Moses has performed. Now, Moses has appointed Joshua to be his successor. That would be found in Deuteronomy 31:6-8. Exodus is kind of the story from the beginning of the exodus out of Egypt, while Deuteronomy is Moses recounting everything he's taught the people, sort of his last major address if you will. So in chapter 31 verse 6 he says to the people:

Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them (the Canaanites), for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.”

Then Moses summoned Joshua and said to him in the presence of all Israel, “Be strong and courageous, for you must go with this people into the land that the LORD swore to their ancestors to give them, and you must divide it among them as their inheritance. The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”

That’s the charge that Moses gave to Joshua. While we’re at Deuteronomy, just to give you a bit more of the flavor. This is interesting because I know of at least one young person I can think of off the top of my head who does not believe in Christianity because of all the violence in the Old Testament. Let’s face it, there’s a lot of violence in the Old Testament, and Deuteronomy chapter 9, it doesn’t seem fair or right, but in Deuteronomy 9:5 God says:

It is not because of your righteousness (the Israelites) or your integrity that you are going in to take possession of their land; but on account of the wickedness of these nations...

So God used an unrighteous people to punish unrighteous people. God was gracious to one people, and the other was a desperately wicked people according to the Bible. Verse 6:

Understand, then, that it is not because of your righteousness that the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stiff-necked people.

If I keep going here I’ll never get to Joshua, so back to Joshua. So that’s the situation, and God’s already told them it’s going to happen little by little, that they will take over this land. It’s not going to happen all at once. So let’s look over the text and see what God wants us to see. We’ve read verse 1, so verse 2:

“Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites. I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates—all the Hittite country—to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. No one will be able to stand against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.

This is carried forward into the New Testament in Hebrews 13:5, I will never leave you nor forsake you, a promise to all Christians. Verse 6:

Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them.

“Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you (the Tora); do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go (never stray from your goal). Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.”

God wants you to be successful. God wants you to be successful in the mission that he gives you. He's given you a territory! He will be with you! He will never leave you! He will never forsake you! So meditate on his word so that you may have it ready in your mind to face your trials each day! God has commanded you to do his mission, whatever it is for you! Do not be dismayed for he will be with you wherever you go!

Now, we've already heard this from Moses, and now the Lord, whether it's a vision or oral communication or an impression on the mind. I mean today for most of us it would be something that we read in the word that God would quicken into our heart, or we would sense an impression in our minds of what God was saying to us. We don't know exactly what it is but the Lord said this to Moses to tell Joshua. Then he said it to Joshua himself! So here's the Big Idea for today: **God will not give you a mission without also equipping you with everything you need succeed.** Just like he did for Joshua.

Now, there's an obvious question that comes to mind. God gave you a mission, but now the supplies are running low. You're out of munitions, the enemy is overrunning your camp. You have some who have deserted you, morale is low. So how can this be true that God will not give you a mission without also equipping you with everything you need to succeed? Well, we know from the scriptures what happened to Joshua. The Lord said it would happen little by little over a period of time and that's exactly what happened! Joshua spent 30 years to conquer this land! It took a long time to complete the mission and he had set backs. Look at chapter 11 of Joshua, verse 18. It says:

Joshua waged war against all these kings for a long time.

Chapter 13 verse 1:

When Joshua was old and well advanced in years, the Lord said to him you are very old and there are still very large areas of land to be taken over.

Chapter 23 verse 14, his farewell address to his leaders:

Even after these setbacks, even though there were still these large territories to claim and all these long wars over the course of 30 years, he said:

Now I am about to go the way of all the Earth. You know with all your heart and soul that not one of these good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled, not one has failed.

On your mission, you don't know exactly what it is that God's will is. There are many of the prophets that were called to go and preach the word of God to people that God said I'm going to use your words to harden their hearts! Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel! So God wants us to be successful on our mission, but he's the one who's going to determine what success looks like, not us. There may be some things on your mission that he wants to build into your life, or to take out of your life. It may be so excruciating from day to day, the setbacks may be so bad that you just don't know how you can go on!

I know that you're going to find this surprising, but if you can believe it, there are actually people that don't like me. I know it's hard to understand! I don't get it! I really don't, I don't understand, but here's the thing; some people think I talk too much about sin. Other people think I don't talk enough about sin. It's okay, I don't like them either. But you're going to have setbacks. That's part of the mission.

Points to Remember

Let's look at some points to remember. I could give you a number of them, but I'm going to give you four. The first is that we are part of God's mission to bring the new covenant to the world. Christ made us ministers of this new covenant of his redemption, his grace and his mercy. Jesus said as the father sent me, so am I sending you, John 20:21. This is a big part of our mission, also tending the culture. It's important to understand that God wants you to be brave, he wants you to be strong, and he wants you to be courageous on this mission. But a man not on his mission has no reason to be brave. Don't think that we have the God given right to be strong and courageous if we're working on some mission other than the he gave us.

Number two. It's going to be hard. You are going to have setbacks, Satan is going to try to discourage you. When women have problems, what do they do? They move towards relationships. When men have problems, what do they tend to do? Move towards isolation. Some of you guys have done this. You disappear for a couple months. We don't see you, and then one day you pop back up. I know what just happened. You got discouraged. You had a setback, and instead of moving toward relationships, which is what God wants you to do, which is the solution, or a big part of it, you moved towards isolation! Which only makes you more vulnerable to the predator we're talking about! The devil himself prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour! It's going to be hard, there will be setbacks, and you will have to fight fear. If the Bible says anything over and over again, it's what? Fear not! Why? Because that's one of the most basic human emotions.

Next, it's probably going to take longer than you think. You can look up later Deuteronomy 7:21-23 that talks about how God is going to give the Israelites this land little by little. It's probably going to take longer than you think. So the first point to remember is that we're on a mission, we are part of God's mission to bring this new covenant to the world, it's going to be hard, and then he will be with you. Point to remember number three, he will be with you. Back to Joshua 1, I'll give you every place you set your foot, I will be with you, I will never leave you, I will never forsake you. What's our part in this? It's verse 6 first. It says be strong and courageous. You're going to lead these people into the land. Be strong and courageous. Verse 7, be strong and very courageous and be careful to obey. Be obedient. Verse 8, don't let this book of the law depart from your mouth. Meditate on it day and night. Verse 9, be strong and courageous, do not be terrified, and do not be discouraged. That's our part! What does that mean? That means to believe the Gospel of Jesus! To believe this word of God! That he is the one who sends us on the mission, that he is the one who is with us, that he is the one who will not forsake nor abandon us. That he will be with us.

C.S. Lewis said this, "Courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the point of testing." So it's to have this determination to not look to the left or to the right, to understand that I am on a mission, I'm part of God's mission. It is going to be hard, but he is going to be with me, so I can have courage. I can be strong. Not in my own strength, Paul said in 2 Corinthians. This is the thorn in the flesh story, he asked it to be removed and Jesus said no! My grace is sufficient for you, for my power, my strength, my courage, my bravery is made perfect in weakness. So it's not your strength, power, and courage, it's his! By grace! Paul even went on to say therefore I'm blessed in my weakness that Christ's power might rest upon me. That is why for Christ's sake I delight in hardships, weaknesses, insults, persecutions, difficulties, for when I am weak then I am strong! Wow! I still can't get over the fact that sometimes people don't like me. The Big Idea today is this, **God will not give you a mission without also equipping you with everything you need succeed.** His grace is sufficient.

You and Your Mission

Finally, you and your mission. Turn with me to Jeremiah 29. Not verse 29, but back to verse 4. We all know the verse I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and so forth. But this was a letter written to the exiles by Jeremiah and at verse 4 it says:

This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper."

Last week I talked about how Christianity is lived inside cultures. This is it! This is the text, Jesus is telling us to live our lives inside cultures. This is the territory that he's given these people. Where you live, that's the territory that God has given you, your family is part of the territory that God has given you. Your work as well, so settle down there. You have a mission! Do the mission! God wants you to be successful! He wants you to be prosperous. Pray for the prosperity and peace of the city to which you have been sent! Your territory! Every one of us has a mission in the community to be a witness for our Lord and savior Jesus Christ.

I had breakfast with a guy yesterday, a friend I have been building a relationship with from the gym for over a year. Younger guy, quite interesting conversationalist. He's read *Man Alive, Is Christianity For You?*, so I thought I was going to be asking him about his spiritual journey and learning about that, explaining the Gospel and how he could become a Christian. But he's got three Christian friends who have all turned him so far against it that he's very unreceptive to the faith. They're closers, but they aren't listeners. He's actually prayed the sinner's prayer with one of the men. I asked did you pray that to please him or because you really meant it? He said to be honest I just prayed it to make him happy, because he seemed to really want it. So we do our mission with gentleness and respect. We're prepared to give an answer for the hope that dwells within us. The dignity of one person is so important! The idea that we're going to bull them over and convert them is so arrogant! No wonder so many non-Christians are so cynical and turned off by Christians. We're such an arrogant bunch sometimes! Our weapons are love and truth. Speaking the truth in love, Ephesians 4:15.

A couple keys to success. Number one, believe that you can be strong and courageous because of the Gospel, because his grace is sufficient. To believe that this is for you, that you don't have to be afraid. He is with you! He will not forsake you, he will not leave you. What was the last verse there? Joshua 1:9, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. Believing the Gospel.

Second, is to execute. You don't sit around and wait for God to deliver you. You go and execute, that's what courage is. Courage is doing something about it, doing something about your fear. Overcoming that fear with action!

My father-in-law, Ed Cole, his vocational mission was life insurance. He's good at it, but every time he went to see a prospective client, he had fear. So he always prayed that God's will would be done for the client and for him, but he was filled with fear. He would look down at that door knob and he would hesitate. Then he would say on the other side of that door knob is your future, now go ahead and take hold of it. Then he would do that and go in. That's what God wants us to do, to execute this mission.

He's not going to give you a mission without equipping you with the courage that you need and every other thing to be successful, that's the Big Idea for today. Let's pray!

Closing Prayer

Our dearest father, Lord, thank you for giving us this principle of mission success. Lord, it's easy to over-spiritualize our disbelief or over-spiritualize our failure to execute. It's easy, Lord, to look at our setbacks and think that somehow that means we're to turn back. Lord, it is easy to forget that you are with us. It's easy to forget that you do want us to be successful on this mission. It's easy to forget just how hard it can be, so I pray, Father, that for some of us today, who are just kind of weary in the task of our mission, that you would revitalize our courage and our strength. For some of us, Lord, who have known this mission but had been hesitating, I pray that we would just execute! That we would just do it! That courage is just doing it! And we'd stop making excuses! That we would believe that you are not going to give us a mission without also giving us everything we need to succeed. When we do succeed, whether it's next year, or ten years, or twenty years from now, we will give you the glory, Lord. We will not claim that it was our strength, our might, but that it was yours. We make this prayer for your sake, and for your glory. Everybody said, amen!