

**SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS**  
**Commentary by Michael Sigler**  
**September 6, 2009**

**Joshua: A Leader for the People**

**Joshua 1:1-11**

**Key verse: “I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9).**

The Book of Joshua begins with the “passing of the baton” of leadership from Moses to Joshua. Moses has died, and now the mantle of leadership falls on Joshua, whose job it will be to establish the Israelites in Canaan.

Who is this man, Joshua? As a young person, he had shared in the suffering of the Israelites as slaves in Egypt. Then Joshua had witnessed God’s miraculous deliverance of the Hebrew people out of Egyptian bondage. During the time of wilderness wandering, Joshua rose to leadership. He led the Israelites to a victory over the Amalekites (Exodus 17). And when the 12 spies reported on their mission into Canaan it was Joshua, along with Caleb, who brought back a “good report,” while the other 10 spies were intimidated by the “giants” they saw there (Numbers 14).

In Joshua 1, God commissions this new leader, instructs him in how to be successful, and encourages him with the promise of His presence and power. These words of *commissioning*, *instruction*, and *encouragement* are relevant—not only for Joshua—but for us, as we face the “giants” in our lives.

God says, “Be strong and courageous....” (v. 9a). It would take strength to overcome the adversaries that waited for Joshua and the Israelites in Canaan. It would take a strength beyond their own natural strength. So, God promises, “...for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go” (v. 9b). For Joshua and the Hebrew nation, strength and courage would be theirs through God’s sustaining and empowering presence.

For the Christ follower, strength and courage are necessary character qualities, if we are to live victorious, abundant lives. Yet, our strength and courage come not from ourselves, but from the sustaining and empowering presence of the Holy Spirit.

I am reminded of a trip through the Atlanta Airport that had me running with my luggage down a long hallway, trying to make a connecting flight. What a relief it was to step onto the moving sidewalk and let it carry me and my suitcase toward our destination.

Pastor Tony Evans had a similar experience, which he describes this way: “One day I was in an airport rushing to catch a plane. I was sweating and puffing when I looked to my right and saw a man walking half as fast as I was, but going faster. He was walking on a moving sidewalk.”

Then Evans made this spiritual application: “When we walk in the Spirit, He comes underneath us and bears us along. We’re still walking, but we walk dependent on Him” (from “Liberating Grace,” *Decision*, July 2002).

Not only does God point Joshua to His presence and power as the source of courage and strength, God also gives Joshua a specific spiritual strategy that will lead to success: “This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful” (v. 8).

God tells Joshua that his success will come if he will *meditate* “day and night” on the “book of the law” and if he will *put into practice* the truth of God’s Word. For Joshua, the book of the law referred to those truths revealed by God through Moses. For us, God’s instruction to meditate and put into practice God’s Word includes all of the Bible, old and new testaments.

What a difference it makes in our Christian lives when we spend time *reading, studying, meditating on, and putting into practice* the great truths of the Bible!

In his classic book, *Knowing God*, J.I. Packer gives a great explanation of what it means to meditate on God’s Word:

“Meditation is the activity of calling to mind, thinking over, dwelling on, and applying to oneself the various things one knows about the works and ways and purpose and promises of God. It is an activity of holy thought, consciously performed in the presence of God, under the eye of God, by the help of God, as a means of communication with God.

“Its purpose is to clear one’s mental and spiritual vision of God, and to let His truth make its full and proper impact on one’s mind and heart. It is a matter of talking to oneself about God and oneself. It is, indeed, often a matter of arguing with oneself, reasoning oneself out of moods of doubt and unbelief into a clear apprehension of God’s power and grace” (*Knowing God*, pp. 18-19).

God promised Joshua that, as he confronted the giants of Canaan, God’s own presence and power would be with him. Relying on God, Joshua could fulfill God’s command to “be strong and courageous.” God also gave Joshua a specific spiritual strategy that would make him and the people he led successful in overcoming their adversaries—“meditate on it [the book of the law] day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it.”

God will give us victory over the giants in our lives as we walk in the power of the Holy Spirit and as we *study, meditate on, and put into practice* the truths of God's inspired Word. Thanks be to God!

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