



Life Group Study Series

Joshua: Week One

16th October 2016

Bible

Joshua 1:1-6 (NIV)

Joshua Installed as Leader

1 After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide: **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. **3** I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. **4** 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. **5** 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. **6** Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them.

Sermon Summary

Joshua 1, like all good introductions, sets the scene for the narrative that follows. This opening chapter reaches back to what has preceded and prepares us for what's next. And what's next is the conquest of the land of Canaan. The conquest is troubling to us as Christians. The justification of holy war strikes us as un-Christian. We will deal with some of this as we move through the story but it is helpful to recognise that the context for the conquest is the promise, sovereignty and holiness of God. The promises of God to Abraham (see Genesis 12:1-7) included the promise that his descendants would inherit the land. This is the driving plot of most of the first five books of the Bible and brings us to Joshua 1 on the very edge of the Promised Land. The giving of this land to the people of Israel is based on God's sovereignty; that the earth is his and everything in it. However, it is also based on his holiness. The conquest is not just the result of a promise, but is a judgment on the people of Canaan (see Genesis 15:16; Deuteronomy 9:5-6). The people of Israel, camped on the east side of the Jordan, are preparing to conquer the land. They are not refugees or nomads, but an army.

The opening chapter is made up of four speeches: the Lord to Joshua, Joshua to the officers, Joshua to the Trans-Jordan tribes and the Trans-Jordan tribes to Joshua. The opening speech of the Lord to Joshua reminds us that Moses, the first leader of Israel, is dead and Joshua has been appointed to lead them into the land. The Lord promises to be with Joshua and calls him again to be "strong and courageous". As we saw in Joshua's commissioning, this charge is not just about the strength and courage necessary to fight a war, but about remaining faithful to the Lord. We are reminded of this in Joshua 1:7-9 where the Lord commands Joshua to keep the Law close at hand so he might be successful in everything he does.

The second speech is never going to make the top 100 speeches of all time, but is important nonetheless. Joshua speaks to the officers and tells them exactly what the Lord had told him to say. This immediate obedience is important for our understanding of Joshua as a leader and indicates that he's at least starting well.

Then Joshua speaks to the Trans-Jordan tribes. These are the 2 1/2 tribes who possessed the land on the eastern side of the Jordan. The story of how they came to this is found in Numbers 21:21-35 and Numbers 32. In brief, the people of Israel, making their way towards Canaan from the east, had to travel through the territory of Sihon king of the Amorites. When they asked for safe passage the Amorites attacked them and the people of Israel defeated them. This was followed up with a victory over King Og of Bashan. So, without really meaning to, the people of Israel now controlled all the territory on the eastern side of the Jordan! The men of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh asked Moses if they could stay. Moses' response is to charge them with discouraging the rest of the nation, but when they promise to go with the rest of Israel and help them conquer the land, Moses agrees to grant them the eastern side.

However, this is the people of Israel. Will these 2 1/2 tribes follow through on what they said? We might hold our breath between verses 15 and 16, but are quite relieved when they answer in the affirmative. They will obey Joshua and will go before the people of Israel!

So we find that the people of Israel appear ready to enter the land. They have passed a couple of hurdles that suggest that they will be faithful and we ought to be encouraged!

For us, we are left to consider the dynamic of participating with God in his promises. While God had given the land to the people of Israel they were called to be active participants in that and were called to put in a mighty effort, especially to be faithful, in order to see it come to pass.

We have been given tremendous promises in Christ and have been invited to participate in their fulfilment too. The question is: Are we putting in a tremendous effort to be faithful in this? The promise to renew and restore all things is what we have been invited to join God in doing and this should call from us a mighty effort to be and do all that God has called us (and equipped us) to do!

Questions

These questions are a guide for conversation. Please take your time over them, and don't feel in a rush to finish them. The objective of a LifeGroup discussion is to engage in meaningful conversation around a Biblical idea, invite the Holy Spirit to lead your time of reflection.

You might want to have a go at question 1 before reading the passage.

1. Opening Discussion: Share a specific moment from your life that, upon reflection, you recognise you had been prepared for in advance. This may be (e.g., a new role at work, a new school, marriage, a new responsibility)
2. Take a moment to read Joshua 1:1-6. As you read, or hear it read, notice if there is a word/phrase in this passage that 'jumps out at you'. What is it? (Try to resist the urge to explain why this word/phrase jumped out – this is about observing, not judging). Invite the Holy Spirit to lead you into that word/phrase. Take some time to share what these words/phrases/pictures are.
3. The context of the Israelites conquest is the promise, the sovereignty and the holiness of God. How does this help you understand the theme of war in the book of Joshua?
4. Hindsight is a wonderful thing, Israel would likely have found much of their journey easier if they knew what we know now about how things turned out. But what does this account remind us about God's character, that helps us have faith for the unknown circumstances of today?
5. There is a curious tension in our participation with God. At one level, the work is all His and yet, we are invited (and equipped) to participate. How do we work *from* our salvation, whilst resisting the dangers of trying to work *for* it?
6. The participation of the people of Israel required a mighty effort. What might our effort look like as we participate in the plans and purposes of God in Christ?
7. Marc suggested that the modern interpretation of Joshua 1:8 is that we might value God's word like we do our mobile phones? What practical steps can we take to remind ourselves of God's character as we face the work he has called us into? [Try to move beyond the obvious answers of 'pray' and 'read my Bible more', how practically and creatively can we do this.]

Prayer

Take some time to reflect on each other's answers to question 7. Pray that God might continue to help us to relax, remembering He is Sovereign over all things, and that this gives us strength and confidence as we do all God intended us to do.

Extras

To help inform this series, Marc also asks:

1. Have a read of Joshua Chapter 2 for next week, are there any questions you would like answered?

[Please feel free to email these to Marc.Rader@gymeabaptist.org.au]