

Joshua 1

What do we know about Joshua (v. 1)? Joshua was from the tribe of Ephraim (Numbers 13:8), and he lived to the ripe old age of 110 (Joshua 24:29). Joshua had been Moses' young aide for a number of years (Numbers 11:28). Before Moses' death Joshua was designated as his successor (Numbers 27:15-23). He and Caleb were the only ones who saw the Promised Land with believing eyes thirty-eight years earlier (Numbers 14:6-10).

What were the marching orders the Lord gave to Joshua (v. 2)? Trained by Moses, Joshua was now commissioned by God to lead the people across the Jordan and into the Promised Land, even though he was over ninety years of age. The land had been promised to Israel, but they must possess it, and Joshua, the Ephraimite, was the man, hand-picked by God, to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land to start the possession process. Moses had earlier forfeited the opportunity to lead his people across the Jordan (Numbers 20:11-12).

What did the Lord promise Joshua (vv. 3-5)? He reiterated the same promise He had made to Moses in Deuteronomy 11:24-25 *"Every place where you set your foot will be yours: Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the Euphrates River to the western sea. No man will be able to stand against you. The Lord your God, as he promised you, will put the terror and fear of you on the whole land, wherever you go."*

And He added the promise of v. 5b: *"As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you."* He thus assured Joshua of continuous victory over his enemies, based on His unfailing presence and help.

Ownership of the land depended on God's faithfulness to give it to the Israelites, but occupation of the land depended on Israel's faithfulness to God (cf. Deuteronomy 30:20).¹

When will the nation of Israel fully possess the Promised Land? The prophets have declared that at the time of Christ's return to earth, He will regather the Jews and reign in the land over a converted and redeemed Israel. Full and complete possession of the land awaits that day (cf. Jeremiah 16:14-16; Amos 9:11-15; Zechariah 8:4-8).²

What encouragement/command did the Lord give to Joshua (v. 6)? Three times Joshua is told by the Lord to be strong and very courageous (vv. 6, 7, 9). This is the first of the three.

What do those commands tell us about Joshua? He was *not* strong and courageous. The size and duration of the task ahead, the pressures of leading such an obstinate people, and the absence of his spiritual mentor, Moses, were perhaps heavy on Joshua's mind at this time. But the Lord would not call him without enabling him.³

What did the second call to courage include (v. 7)? He repeated His encouragement to be strong and very courageous along with the added command to *"be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you."*

Joshua's responsibility included unswerving obedience to the Mosaic Law. This would be the key to his success. Knowing the Law was only the first step, practicing it was what would make Joshua effective (cf. Deuteronomy 5:32-33).⁴

What command and promise did the Lord give to Joshua (v. 8)? Moses had left Israel a written document ("*this Book of the Law*"), which the Israelites regarded as authoritative, namely, the Mosaic Law. The Lord commanded Joshua to keep this Law in mind constantly ("*meditate on it day and night*"), so that he would remember his responsibilities under God and would find encouragement to keep them (cf. Psalms 1:2; Isaiah 59:21).⁵

To enjoy prosperity and be successful in the Conquest of Canaan, Joshua was to do what three things with regard to the Scriptures (v. 8)? (a) The Law was not to depart from his mouth; i.e., he was to talk about it (cf. Deuteronomy 6:7); (b) He was to *meditate* on it day and night, i.e., to think about it (cf. Psalm 1:2; 119:97); (c) He was to do everything written in it; i.e., to *obey* its commands fully and to act by it (cf. Ezra 7:10; James 1:22-25), i.e., “Talk about it; think about it; do it!”⁶

The third call to courage included what promise from the Lord to Joshua (v. 9)? The promise of *God’s presence*. This did not minimize the task Joshua faced. He would encounter giants and fortified cities, but God’s presence would make all the difference.

Joshua probably had times when he felt weak, inadequate, and frightened. But God knew all about his feelings of personal weakness and fear and told Joshua three times, “*be strong and courageous*”. God also urged him not to be afraid or discouraged (cf. Deuteronomy 1:21; 31:8; Joshua 1:9; 8:1). These charges with their accompanying assurances (God’s promise, God’s power, and God’s presence) were sufficient to last a lifetime. Believers in all ages can be uplifted by the same three assurances.⁷

This passage contains the principles necessary for spiritual success in every age. We must: know what God requires, maintain perpetual awareness of it, and be consistently and completely obedient to it in our daily experience—in order to gain victory over our spiritual adversaries.⁸

What order did Joshua give to his officers (vv. 10-11)? The people were to prepare provisions for their journey into the land of Canaan to take possession of the land God had promised.

What was unique about the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half tribe of Manasseh (v. 12-15)? They were the only tribes who received a land inheritance east of the Jordan River (Numbers 34:15).

Of what did Joshua remind the two and one-half tribes which were settling east of the Jordan (vv. 13-15)? They were reminded that they must help in the conquest of the land; then they could return to their families. To this they readily agreed (vv. 16-18).⁹

How did the two and a half tribes respond to Joshua’s command (vv. 16-18)? They reaffirmed their commitment to join the other tribes in battle (cf. Numbers 32:25-27), as shown by their vows of loyalty and obedience (“we will go...”). Additionally, they pledged to execute anyone in their ranks who failed to follow through. They also offered words of encouragement to Joshua, urging him to “be strong and courageous” (v. 18).

The response from the two and a half Transjordanian tribes was both eager and wholehearted. It likely reflected the unified attitude of all the tribes as they prepared for the invasion of the Promised Land. This display of support must have been a tremendous source of encouragement to their new leader, Joshua, assuring him that the people stood behind him in this pivotal moment. Moses had left Joshua big leadership shoes to fill but He has quickly earned the respect of the people and he has great trust in his God.

¹ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Joshua, 2025 Edition (published by Sonic Light), 17.

² Donald K. Campbell, “Joshua” in the Bible Knowledge Commentary: J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 328.

³ William MacDonald, Believer’s Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 239.

⁴ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Joshua, 2025 Edition (published by Sonic Light), 18.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Donald K. Campbell, “Joshua” in the Bible Knowledge Commentary: J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 329.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Dr. Thomas L. Constable, Notes on Joshua, 2025 Edition (published by Sonic Light), 21.

⁹ William MacDonald, Believer’s Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments, ed. Arthur Farstad (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), 239.