

Joshua 1 • Spiritual Leaders & Followers

Introduction

One of the toughest issues we face is the tension between biblical teaching of a new life in Christ and having to live in a culture that is **NOT** based in Christ. Cultural versus biblical values clash at every level, particularly in the way that we approach church operations. More often than not, a secular corporate business model is employed to form mission statements, committees, select and employ staff, and so on to do the “ministry” of the church. But such a leadership structure is not necessarily biblical nor how God operates. There is a far different set of expectations placed on spiritual leaders and followers than within a corporate business culture as evidenced in the transition from Moses to Joshua and Israel’s second generation about to accomplish what the first generation so miserably failed to do.

¹Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ servant, saying, ²“Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel. ³Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses. ⁴From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory. ⁵No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. ⁶Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.

[Read v.1-6]

Q: What is the title here given for Moses?

A: “...the servant of the Lord...” (v.1)

Q: What is the title here given for Joshua?

A: “...Moses’ servant...” (v.1)

Q: What does this teach about the biblical definition of a leader?

A: They are a servant, someone doing their Master’s work and in turn concerned more for the needs of others than their own.

But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ. But the greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.

Matthew 23:8-12

Q: According to v.5 & 6, how is this legacy of service passed on from generation to generation and for what purpose?

A: It’s passed on by God (“Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you...”) in order to fulfill His plans and will that began before we were born (“...which I swore to their fathers...”).

Q: How might these opening verses be summarized as a life’s “calling” or for Joshua?

A: God is providing the greater, general instructions to the whole of Israel through Joshua as leader. God is not just passing the mantel of leadership down to Joshua from Moses but providing the specific goals for Joshua’s life as God’s servant to the people.

⁷“Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. ⁸This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. ⁹Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”

[Read v.7-9]

Q: How are the instructions given to Joshua in v.7-9 very different than those God provided in v.1-6?

A: Whereas v.1-6 were more general instructions for Joshua's service on behalf of the whole of Israel, these are personal instructions for Joshua's service to God.

Q: 4 times in this chapter Joshua is admonished to “be strong and courageous”. What are the specific things listed in these verses that provide the foundation to “be strong and courageous”?

1. “...be careful to do according to all the law...” (v.7)
2. “...do not turn from it [the law] to the right or to the left...” (v.7)
3. “...the law shall not depart from your mouth...” (v.8)
4. “...you shall meditate on it [the law] day and night...” (v.8)
5. “...be careful to do according to all that is written...” (v.8)

Point: Essentially these are instructions to be completely immersed in God's Word from one's whole heart, mind, and soul.

Application: Does receiving a special “calling” or a vision for God's work by the church place that leader above everyone else in terms of their personal walk? Do you see that leaders are called to the same level of obedience to God's Word as everyone else? Another biblical term to describe a spiritual leader is “shepherd”. How are the qualities of a servant and a shepherd similar, and how should they reside in the life and character of spiritual leaders?

Point: This Joshua is a type of Joshua the Messiah (Jesus) to come. Just as God gave general revelation and direction for the church through Jesus, so Jesus also had to be totally and completely obedient to all of God's Word in His service to and for God. This example is handed down through them to us.

[Read v.10-15]

¹⁰Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, ¹¹“Pass through the midst of the camp and command the people, saying, ‘Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you are to cross this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you, to possess it.’”

¹²To the Reubenites and to the Gadites and to the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joshua said, ¹³“Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, ‘The LORD your God gives you rest and will give you this land.’ ¹⁴Your wives, your little ones, and your cattle shall remain in the land which Moses gave you beyond the Jordan, but you shall cross before your brothers in battle array, all your valiant warriors, and shall help them, ¹⁵until the LORD gives your brothers rest, as He gives you, and they also possess the land which the Lord your God is giving them. Then you shall return to your own land, and possess that which Moses the servant of the LORD

Q: If God's goals are revealed to the people through Joshua, how are they actually accomplished? What is the role of spiritual leaders and followers in the pursuit of God's will?

A: The goals are accomplished by the people. The leader's role is to point to God as the Source and motivation.

Application: Sometimes a member of the congregation states, “That's why we pay the pastor.” Why is that an absolutely wrong position? Has any general won a battle without his troops?

Q: What is Joshua doing with the tribes beyond the Jordan? How does it relate to this discussion?

A: Joshua reminds them of their commitment to God and those things God has already been faithful in to them. He is preparing them to act upon God's calling by holding them accountable to God's Word, both in general and personally.

gave you beyond the Jordan toward the sunrise.”

¹⁶They answered Joshua, saying, “All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. ¹⁷Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you; only may the LORD your God be with you as He was with Moses. ¹⁸Anyone who rebels against your command and does not obey your words in all that you command him, shall be put to death; only be strong and courageous.”

[Read v.16-18]

Q: How might this relate to God’s encouragement to Joshua in v.7-9?

A: In both cases, Joshua is encouraged to “*be strong and courageous*”, and in both instances the supporting message has to do with obedience to God’s Word. Just as God stipulated to Joshua that immersion in His Word is required, so here obedience to God’s Word through Moses and Joshua is defined.

Q: According to Old Testament Law, what was the general basis for putting someone to death?

A: The death sentence was meted out for breaking specific laws. In other words, it comes about by disobedience to God’s Word.

Q: How might we apply this to the context of the New Testament church?

A: It’s the general congregation’s responsibility to hold itself accountable to obedience to God’s Word. It’s not the sole function of a pastor or spiritual leader, but the corporate responsibility of every member of the body to hold every other member accountable to God’s Word.

Overall Application

- *Do you see every member of the church’s first and foremost responsibility as personal obedience to God’s Word? Can the greater goals of an organization or movement succeed without it?*
- *Do you see yourself in a partnership with spiritual leaders, or do you still think in terms of it being “their” goals or “their” ideas? What is our responsibility for making such goals and ideas actually happen?*
- *Why is it not “good enough” for some in the body to participate and some not? Why is it our responsibility to hold each other accountable in our obedience to God’s Word and how it’s fulfilled in the work of the Kingdom?*