

## Leadership Lessons from the Life of Joshua

by Bayless Conley

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Good morning. Hi, out on the plaza and people watching online. Wherever you happen to be around the world, hello to you. I'm ready. Are you ready? Okay. I prayed before I came. I'm not going to ask if you did. I know some of you did, but why don't we just maybe set our hearts in a posture to receive from the Lord. I know I have been in church services, even during worship, with my hands lifted up, but I've been somewhere else, and it wasn't a heavenly place. I've been on the golf course with my hands lifted up, thinking about that stupid putt I missed on 17. I know there is no one else in the house like me, where your mind can get distracted or whatever. If we make the decision that our hearts are going to be in a posture, leaning out to really listen to God's Word and to see what the Holy Spirit is saying to us as a family and to us individually at this particular season of our journey, I believe we can get something that will help us. So, will you agree with me right now?

Father, we just settle our hearts down, and we give You our full, undivided attention. We know that the Holy Spirit has come to lead and guide us into all the truth, to show us things to come, to comfort, to strengthen, and to guide. Lord, we embrace the Holy Spirit's ministry, and we set Your Word as our final authority in all matters of conscience and living. We ask You to speak to us today. Lord, in anticipation, we ask these things. In everything, may Jesus be glorified.

If you agree, say "amen." We have been studying Joshua, a man whose influence literally held a nation steady for God all the days of his life. For we're told that when Joshua and the elders who were his contemporaries died, the nation, as a whole, turned away from God. The man had such influence that he literally kept the nation on track. As I've been contemplating the record of his life and of his exploits, several words have sort of stood out to me, five in all. I'm going to talk to you about those words in connection with the life of Joshua. The first word is faith. He was a man of stalwart, active faith. You can basically describe Joshua's faith by three things. Number one, he listened. Number two, he agreed. And number three, he acted. He listened, he agreed, and he acted. I just want to encourage you, if just what I'm talking about now, if you will get it, it will change your life. First, he listened.

<sup>17</sup> So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Romans 10:17 NKJV. First, Joshua listened, and found out what God had promised or said. He found out what God had promised or said. Number two, his heart and his lips agreed with what God had promised or with what God had said. Romans 10:9–10 NKJV,

<sup>9</sup> That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

The word *confess*, when it talks about confessing with your mouth, the Greek word literally means, "to say the same thing." Your heart and your lips need to be in agreement, and they need to say the same thing that God says. Now, in context, those verses I just mentioned deal

## Leadership Lessons from the Life of Joshua

with having a right relationship with God and having your sins forgiven. The word saved used there, if you've been with us on Sunday nights over in building B for the healing services, we've taken some time talking about that word. It's the Greek word Sozo. It is used in the New Testament to describe physical healing as well as to be free from oppressive powers of darkness in your mind, to be in your right mind, to be healed in your body, and to have your sins forgiven. The same word sometimes, in one chapter, is used to describe all three things. So faith works the same way in all of these arenas. Heart and lips must agree. Faith will not work if we speak contrary to what God has promised or declared. It won't.

I have a dear friend, and I was at his house one day. We were doing something in the backyard, and he was in a mood. He is just complaining about this, and talking about how this isn't working, and this has gone wrong. We have been friends a long time, and he's a faith guy. We've walked a lot of miles together in the Lord, and being the close friend that I am, I could be really blunt with him. I said, "Hey, do you know what your biggest problem is?" He goes, "What?" I said, "It's about an inch below your nose." He gave me a dirty look and went back to doing what he was doing, and about a half hour later, he came up and said, "Bay, you're right. I know better than this. I'm speaking contrary to everything that God has said. I'm speaking contrary to His promises. I'm going to get it right, and I'm going to get back in agreement with God." And he did. He started saying what God had said about those situations. Those things that he was complaining about, when he got in agreement with God, those things began to shift.

Number three, Joshua was a doer of God's Word. He acted. He acted on what God had promised and said. At some point, your feet need to harmonize with your heart and lips for faith to work. James 2:18 says, "I will show you my faith by my actions." Joshua, if you want to describe his faith, it's really simple. He listened. He found out what God had promised and what God had said. He agreed with his heart and his lips, and then he acted on what God said. Faith is pretty simple. Now, from the time of Abraham, God had promised a territory for His people. Hence the phrase, "The promised land." Through the prophets, God had reiterated that promise to successive generations, all the way up to the time of Israel's exodus from Egypt. They were the generation that was destined and called to actually inherit the promised land. Joshua was a part of that generation. I want to give you just a few of the statements that God made about inheriting and going into the promised land that came during Joshua's day. I just want to encourage you because from this point, for a little while, I'm going to read a lot of Scriptures. Let the story itself speak to you. Let the story itself make sense to you as we put a few different pieces together. So, here they are still in the land of Egypt, and God is giving instructions to Moses. In Exodus 6:6–8 NKJV, the Lord said this to Moses,

<sup>6</sup> "Therefore say to the children of Israel: 'I am the Lord; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, I will rescue you from their bondage, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. <sup>7</sup> I will take you as My people, and I will be your God. Then you shall know that I am the Lord your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. <sup>8</sup> And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as a heritage: I am the Lord.' "

So, he brings them out of the land of Egypt with all of the miracles. They're in the wilderness. It's a very short distance now to the border of the promised land. And again, God gives these instructions to Moses in Numbers 33. This is in the wilderness on their way now. In verses 51–53 NKJV the Lord said,

## Leadership Lessons from the Life of Joshua

<sup>51</sup> “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When you have crossed the Jordan into the land of Canaan, <sup>52</sup> then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, destroy all their engraved stones, destroy all their molded images, and demolish all their high places; <sup>53</sup> you shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land and dwell in it, for I have given you the land to possess.

Did you notice how God puts it in the past tense? He says, “I’ve given it to you.” The Scripture in the New Testament says, “God calls things that are not as though they are.” When God puts something in the past tense, He authorizes you to do the same thing. Now, all of these things came to Joshua’s ears. Then again, I read to you from Deuteronomy 7, beginning in verses 17–21 NLT. The Lord said,

<sup>17</sup> “Perhaps you will think to yourselves, ‘How can we ever conquer these nations that are so much more powerful than we are?’ <sup>18</sup> But don’t be afraid of them! Just remember what the Lord your God did to Pharaoh and to all the land of Egypt. <sup>19</sup> Remember the great terrors the Lord your God sent against them. You saw it all with your own eyes! And remember the miraculous signs and wonders, and the amazing power he used when He brought you out of Egypt. The Lord your God will use this same power against the people you fear. <sup>20</sup> And then the Lord your God will send hornets to drive out the few survivors still hiding from you! <sup>21</sup> “No, do not be afraid of those nations, for the Lord your God is among you, and He is a great and awesome God.”

God has said all these things again and again, and those are just a few examples. We could pull many more. The Lord said it again and again, “I have given you the land. Every place the soles of your feet tread, I’ve given it to you. It’s yours.” So now they get to the border of the promised land, and they take a leader from each of the 12 tribes. They send 12 men in to spy out the land. “What is the best way that we go about this?” They spend a long time in the land, searching it all out, and they come back. They say, “Look, it’s everything God said. It’s a land that flows with milk and honey.” They brought back some of the fruits—amazing. But then they said, “But.” Ten of the spies said, “But.”

I was doing a meeting years ago. It was actually in a bit of a gang area, and it was a church that was made up of mostly ex-gang members who had gotten saved. I don’t know why, but they asked me to come do a luncheon. So, I did. We are having lunch, and I’m going to speak. This guy comes up and sits down next to me. He’s what they call a veterano. He’d been in the gangs too long. He actually had a cane and walked with a bit of a limp. I found out his story afterwards. He killed a rival gang member, and some of the guys from that gang snuck into his house while he was sleeping on the couch and shot him point-blank in the back of the head. He survived it, but due to the injuries from the bullet that went through his skull, he had to walk with a cane. He sits down next to me, and he had a really thick accent. He goes, “Hey, are you the preacher?” I go, “Yeah.”

He looks at me and says, “Hey, preacher, do you know what the uncompromised Word of God is?” He puts his finger on my Bible. I said, “Tell me, what’s the uncompromised Word of God?” He said, “It means that there’s no buts in this book.” From that day to this day, I don’t think I’ve heard a clearer explanation. But 10 of the spies who came back said, “Look, it’s everything God said but, there are giants and walled cities.” Then Caleb, who was one of the 12—Caleb and Joshua were 2 of the 12 who went. But now Caleb speaks up. Numbers 13:30 NKJV,

## Leadership Lessons from the Life of Joshua

<sup>30</sup> Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, “Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it.”

Now, when it said that, “He quieted the people,” I don't think there was anything nice about that. I just imagined Caleb going, “Stop! Stop! Stop right now! Stop! Shut up, stop! We are well able to overcome the land. Let's go up at once. Let's possess it now!” He was setting himself completely in agreement with God. He saw the same giants. He saw the same walled cities. He saw the same armaments that all the Canaanites had. Verses 31–33 NKJV say,

<sup>31</sup> But the men who had gone up with him said, “We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we.” <sup>32</sup> And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, “The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature. <sup>33</sup> There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.”

But it gets worse. Numbers 14:1–4 NKJV,

<sup>1</sup> So all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night. <sup>2</sup> And all the children of Israel complained against Moses and Aaron, and the whole congregation said to them, “If only we had died in the land of Egypt! Or if only we had died in this wilderness! <sup>3</sup> Why has the Lord brought us to this land to fall by the sword, that our wives and children should become victims? Would it not be better for us to return to Egypt?” <sup>4</sup> So they said to one another, “Let us select a leader and return to Egypt.”

So now it's not just the ten spies who have set themselves in opposition to what God has promised again and again and what God has clearly said. Now it's the whole nation. They're accusing God of bringing them out there to murder them, murder their wives, and murder their children. They said, “It would have been better that we would have died out here.” Now Joshua enters the fray. Verse 6 of the same chapter,

<sup>6</sup> But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes.

I think being a tailor in these old times would have been a really good job. You would have never been without work. People were always tearing their clothes. Verses 7–9 NKJV,

<sup>7</sup> And they spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying: “The land we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. <sup>8</sup> If the Lord delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, ‘a land which flows with milk and honey.’ <sup>9</sup> Only do not rebel against the Lord, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the Lord is with us. Do not fear them.”

How did everyone respond to Joshua's faith talk? Verse 10 NKJV,

<sup>10</sup> And all the congregation said to stone them with stones.

## Leadership Lessons from the Life of Joshua

If you read the story, God says, “Joshua and Caleb, you have set yourself in agreement with Me. You are going to go into the promised land. Everyone else said, ‘If only we had died in the wilderness.’ I’m going to give Joshua and Caleb what they said. I’m going to give you what you said. You’re all going to die in the wilderness.” God says, “Start doing laps around Mount Sinai.” For the next 40 years, that whole generation, everyone who was old enough to go to war, wandered. God didn’t hold the youngsters responsible. But that older generation, all of them, died off except for Joshua and Caleb. Forty years around Mount Sinai. Forty years in the wilderness. They got exactly what they said. Joshua got exactly what he said. They all got exactly what they said. Forty years later, we come to Joshua 1:1–3 NKJV.

<sup>1</sup> After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, it came to pass that the Lord spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ assistant, saying: <sup>2</sup> “Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them—the children of Israel. <sup>3</sup> Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses.”

God is saying the same thing exactly 40 years later. He hasn’t changed at all. His promise remains the same. God is saying exactly the same thing He said 40 years before, and that He said 400 years before to Abraham. God hasn’t changed at all. The fact that some people failed to inherit His promise didn’t change the promise. God has not changed at all. The only reason Joshua is here on the border of the promised land, ready to go in, is because he has stayed in agreement with God for 40 years. I want that to sink in. Now, the first obstacle on the other side of the Jordan in the promised land, as we all know, was the city of Jericho. Joshua 6:2 NKJV says,

<sup>2</sup> And the Lord said to Joshua: “See! I have given Jericho into your hand, its king, and the mighty men of valor.”

Again, God is putting it in the past tense. “I’ve given it to you.” Then He gives instructions, and they’re fairly odd. He says, “Joshua, you take all of the men of war, take the ark and the priests. They need to have their rams horns and their trumpets. I want you to go in, march around the city once, and then go back to camp. No one is allowed to say a word. Utter silence.” Joshua is probably thinking, “Okay, and then?” God says, “I want you to do the same thing on the second day.” “Okay.” “Day three, same thing. Day four, same thing. Not a word. Day five, same thing. Day six, same thing. Everybody march around. Nobody’s allowed to say a word. On day seven, I want the priest to blow on their trumpets, and then I want everyone to shout, and the walls will fall down.” Joshua says, “Okay, I’m in.” Do you realize how nonsensical that is? Do you realize how strange that is? But Joshua agreed, and he did it. And on the seventh day in Joshua 6:16 NKJV, it says,

<sup>16</sup> . . . when the priests blew the trumpets, that Joshua said to the people: “Shout, for the Lord has given you the city!”

He said exactly what God had said. He put it in the past tense, just like God had done. I want you to think about this for a minute. Regarding the promised land, God has said, “I will give you the land. Do not fear the people there. You will drive them out. They will have no defense against you. I am with you.” Joshua said, “God has given us the land. Do not fear the people there. We will drive them out. Their defense has departed from them, and the Lord is with us.” On every point, Joshua said exactly what God said. He put God’s Words in his own mouth. Then, when it came to Jericho, God said, “Shout, for I have given you the city.” Joshua

## Leadership Lessons from the Life of Joshua

said, "Shout, for the Lord has given you the city." Faith listens and finds out what God has said or promised, then agrees heart, lips, and feet.

When I was first saved, I started playing guitar. I'd never played before, and I learned to play after I became a Christian. I got this little harmony guitar. It was made out of mahogany wood, a nice little guitar. It didn't have much of a voice, but it played really nice. It was a really thin guitar, and didn't really project well, but I loved the thing. There was a guy—I was living in southern Oregon. There was a guy named Andy. Andy was sort of the pastor of all the hippie Christians in southern Oregon. Andy and I became friends, and Andy had this beautiful Martin D-35. Whenever I'd been over to his place, I'd play that guitar, and I'd think, "Man, that's a nice guitar." I actually started leading worship in different settings at that time. One day, I was praying. I said, "Lord, I'd really like a better guitar. I want a guitar like Andy's. I want a Martin D-35." So, I prayed, and I prayed based on Mark 11:24 KJV,

<sup>24</sup> "What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them."

So, I prayed, and I believed I received it when I prayed, and I thanked God for it. In fact, the Amplified Bible says, "Believe it has been granted to you, and you'll get it." I just thanked God for it. A few days later, just in a time of prayer, I'm talking to God, and I'm waiting on God. I'm thinking about that guitar, and it seemed to me the Holy Spirit was challenging me. He said, "Bayless, do you need two guitars?" I'm thinking, "No, actually, no." He said, "Do you really believe that I've answered your prayer?" I said, "Lord, I do." I just felt, again, this is just me, and my own musings, and the Holy Spirit dealing with me in my prayer closet.

I felt like the Lord said, "You need to give that harmony guitar away then." I said, "Okay." I gave it to a young evangelist. So now, I don't have a physical guitar at all, but I do have one by faith. I was with some friends. They said, "Hey, Bayless, come, we want you to meet so-and-so. He's a brother in the Lord." We went over to this guy's house, and we sit down. We're having a cup of tea or a cup of coffee or whatever in his living room, and I notice there's an old guitar in the corner, kind of turned around. I go pick it up, and the moment I picked it up, I realized it's a piece of junk. It was a piece of junk, and there were like three strings on it, and they didn't help at all. It would have played just as well without any strings. I asked the guy, "Do you mind?"

I'm sitting on the couch, and I'm goofing around with this junky old thing, and the guy goes, "Bayless, do you play?" I said, "A little bit." He said, "Do you have a guitar?" Now, realize, I'm a young Christian, and I've grown a little wiser about who I share certain things with and how much I share, but I didn't have many filters back then. I say, "Yeah, I have a guitar." He says, "What kind of guitar do you have?" I said, "I have a Martin D-35." Now, you need to realize, at that time in my life, I may as well have prayed for Jimi Hendrix's white Stratocaster. A Martin D-35 was so far out of the range of anything I could afford. Just an absolute impossibility.

The guy goes, "You have a Martin D-35?" He said, "Nice." He said, "Where is it?" I said, "I don't know." He said, "What do you mean you don't know? I thought you said you have a guitar." I said, "I do have one." He says, "What are you talking about?" I said, "Well, I prayed, and God answered my prayer." He says, "If God answered your prayer, you'd know where the guitar was." I said, "Well," and I quoted Jesus. Jesus said, "What things soever you desire when you pray, believe you receive them, and you'll have them." I said, "I believe I receive when I pray. In 1 John, it says, 'If you ask anything according to His will, you know that He hears you. And if you know He hears you, you know you have the petition you asked of Him.' So I have it. It's mine by faith." The guy said, "That's stupid." I remember I said, "It's not stupid to me." He

## Leadership Lessons from the Life of Joshua

said, "No, that's stupid. You need to quit saying that. If God answered your prayer, you'd have the guitar in your hand."

I said, "No, God answered my prayer when I said amen." He said, "That's stupid. That's false doctrine." I said, "No, it's not." He said, "You don't have a guitar." I said, "I do. I've got a Martin D-35. I'm sorry." Everybody in there is like kind of watching like, "What's going on?" This guy is going after me, hammer and tongs. He said again, "You need to stop saying that. That's wrong." I said, "It's not wrong. I may not have it physically, but I have the guitar. God has already answered my prayer. I have it. It's mine." He said, "Stop it! If you'll stop saying that, I'll give you that guitar in your hand right now." I looked and said, "No thanks. I have a Martin D-35." He is still hammering me. It was super awkward. I said, "Guys, I've got to go." So, I put the guitar down, and I walked out of the guy's house.

It was a few weeks later. Somebody who knew nothing about my prayer, knew nothing at all, gave me a 1969 Martin D-35 made out of Brazilian rosewood. Now, if there are any guitar nerds in the house, you know what a honey of a guitar that is. There were only two years where they could get rosewood out of Brazil. They banned all harvesting and all export of any rosewood. They made a very, very limited amount of the D-35s in the Brazilian rosewood. The resonance is like nothing you've ever heard. The beauty of the thing. It's one of the most expensive acoustic guitars that you can get in the country right now. I looked the price up just the other day, out of curiosity. I was absolutely shocked at how valuable they are.

Now, I could have taken that piece of junk as a substitute, but I was so glad that I had held on. Again, today if I was in the same situation, I would have responded to the guy differently and just kept my faith, between me and God alone. But the point I'm making is I was just agreeing with what Jesus said. You need to do the same thing when it comes to your health, when it comes to your peace, when it comes to your enemies, when it comes to your conduct, and when it comes to your family. You need to listen and find out what God has promised or said, agree with your lips and with your heart, and then act on it. It's not that difficult. Joshua was a man of stalwart faith. The second word that comes to me when I think about his life is friendship. Joshua had Caleb. When they came back from the promised land, it was those two against the 10. The 10 are saying, "We can't do it." Joshua and Caleb said, "Yes, we can. Let's go up now. We saw everything you saw, but their defense has departed from them. We know it because God already told us that's the case." Then, it wasn't just Joshua and Caleb against the 10. It was Joshua and Caleb against the whole nation. Talk about being in a minority.

It's interesting. If you read the story in Joshua 14, Caleb comes to him. They've been in the promised land for a few years, and Caleb says, "Hey, Joshua, I'm 85 years old now." He quotes what God has said. "God said, 'Every place the soles of our feet tread upon, He has given it to us.' I'm 85, and I'm as strong now as I was when we were 40 when we first went into the land. When we first went in, my heart and my lips agreed with God. I brought back word as it was in my heart. But my brothers, the evil report they brought, melted the hearts of all the people. But I know what God has said. There is this mountain over here, Joshua. It's full of walled cities and giants. I want that for my inheritance." Joshua said, "Go get them, tiger." Caleb went and defeated all the giants and seized all of those walled cities. He's still placing himself in agreement at year 85 and acting upon the Word of God. Joshua had the right kind of friends, which is especially necessary in times of crisis.

Now, I realize that some relationships are more redemptive in nature than anything else. God puts you into someone's life to help them grow and to encourage them. But the truth is, some people don't want to grow. They don't want to change, and they don't want to get close to God.

## Leadership Lessons from the Life of Joshua

They are content to just pull you down into the same hole that they're in, and you don't need friends like that. You need some Calebs who will stand with you and encourage you to trust God in the hard times. Do you have Calebs in your life? Choose your friends carefully because you will become what they are. Proverbs 27:17 NLT says,

<sup>17</sup> As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend.

But if your friends aren't sharpening you, chances are they're making you dull, and you don't need that. I know a young man in our church. I've been watching him. He's growing. He's drawing close to God. He's growing in faith. He's serving. It's noticeable to me what's going on in this young man's life, absolutely noticeable. The advancement he's making in spiritual things. But I look at the other men who he's surrounded himself with. They are encouraging him and reinforcing the language and the action of faith. Much of what is happening in his life has to do with the friends that he has chosen.

Another word, and it's an important one, and that is failures. Joshua learned from failures, not just his own, but the failures of others. First, there is the failure of Moses. Moses begged God to go into the promised land, and God wouldn't allow Him to go in. That's another message in and of itself. But here's Moses, larger than life, who led people out of the land of Egypt. He stretched out his rod, and the Red Sea divided. This is Moses, the one who hit the rock, and water came out of the rock. Moses doesn't make it into the promised land. He failed to inherit what God had promised. But Joshua didn't quit because his mentor failed. I know five pastors who today, all of their fathers were pastors as well, and all of their fathers messed up. All of their fathers tumbled and fell. Three of them, spectacular, repeated moral failures. But all five of these friends of mine, all five of them are going on with God and serving the Lord because they've got their own relationship with Jesus. They would have every excuse in the world to say, "Well, I'm not going to do this anymore."

My friend, do not let the failure of someone who you look up to become an excuse for you to quit. Don't let it be an excuse for you to walk away from God or go off the rails. Maybe your daddy was a pastor. Maybe he was unfaithful to your mother. Maybe he was a great pulpiteer and a monster at home. I'm sorry that you had to go through that. But you have your own relationship with Jesus. Joshua didn't quit when Moses failed to enter the promised land. You shouldn't quit either. And then another failure. They defeated Jericho. The next city is much smaller. It's called Ai. They send a much smaller detachment there. They said, "Wait, we don't need to send the whole army. This is going to be easy." But they are miserably defeated. Just embarrassingly defeated by the soldiers in Ai. They just didn't see that coming. We read what happens next. I'm going to read to you Joshua 7, beginning in verse 5 NLT

<sup>5</sup> The Israelites were paralyzed with fear at this turn of events, and their courage melted away. <sup>6</sup> Joshua and the elders of Israel tore their clothing in dismay, (I told you a tailor is a good job. They tore their clothes) threw dust on their heads, and bowed face down to the ground before the Ark of the Lord until evening. <sup>7</sup> Then Joshua cried out, "Oh, Sovereign Lord, why did you bring us across the Jordan River if you are going to let the Amorites kill us? If only we had been content to stay on the other side!" <sup>8</sup> Lord, what can I say now that Israel has fled from its enemies? <sup>9</sup> For when the Canaanites and all the other people living in the land hear about it, they will surround us and wipe our name off the face of the earth. And then what will happen to the honor of your great name?" <sup>10</sup> But the Lord said to Joshua, "Get up! Why are you lying on your face like this?" <sup>11</sup> Israel has sinned and broken my covenant! They have stolen some of the things that I commanded must be set apart for me. And they have

## Leadership Lessons from the Life of Joshua

not only stolen them but have lied about it and hidden the things among their own belongings. <sup>12</sup> That is why the Israelites are running from their enemies in defeat.”

“Get up, Joshua. Get up.” And through a process, they discovered who was at the root of the problem. It was an Israelite named Achan. He had stolen all this stuff and buried it in his tent. Interesting, the Hebrew name Achan means “trouble.” Listen, if there has been a failure to obtain what God has promised, the trouble is with us, not with God. Joshua was on his face, “God, why did You let this happen? We should have stayed. God, why? God, what's going on? Where are You?” God says, “Get up. The trouble is not with Me. The trouble is with you, Joshua.” Any time there has been a failure to obtain what God has promised, listen, don't blame God. You may not understand it. You may not see it.

All of us, being human, have limited insight. We're growing in grace. We're growing in wisdom. We're growing in understanding. There's some stuff I don't have an answer to, but I know God is faithful. I know His Word is true. Even if I can't explain why something happened or why something didn't happen, I'm going to continue to go forward and to trust God. I'm going to get up off of my face, and I'm not going to accuse God. I'm not going to blame God. I know if there's a disconnect, it's on this side. Maybe I won't even see it until I get to heaven. I hope I get to see some of those things before, but I know God is true. I'm going to go forward and believe in His Word. I'm taking it to the hilt, my friend. You need to learn to do the same thing. Some of you have been lying down in defeat and blaming God. I say to you as compassionately as I can, “It's time for you to get up. Get up.” Achan, not on heaven's side. Achan's trouble is on our side.

Joshua learned from these failures. Then there was another one. You find it in Joshua 9, and it was with the Gibeonites. The Gibeonites actually were the next territory. They had a number of towns. There was Joshua, there was Jericho, Ai, and then the Gibeonites with their towns. But they come to Joshua and wear these old, worn-out sandals. They put stale, moldy bread in their bags, with these old, torn, weathered wineskins. They come into the Israelite camp, and they start talking like they're believers. The first thing they said, “We've come because of the name of the Lord your God. We heard what happened in Egypt, and we heard what happened to Og, and Sihah, and the kings on the other side of Jordan.” They didn't mention anything about Jericho and Ai. They come talking like, “Hey, we believe in God like you do. We want to be your servants.” Joshua and the leaders, the Bible says they looked at the evidence. They looked at the stale, moldy bread, they looked at the old wineskins, and the old sandals. It said that they went ahead and entered into a solemn covenant with them, but they didn't ask counsel of the Lord. They took the evidence of their eyes and didn't ask counsel of the Lord. Then three days later, they found out that the Gibeonites were their neighbors.

They didn't break that covenant, but it caused Israel a lot of trouble in the future. You read in the days of Saul, Israel's first king, he tried to wipe the Gibeonites out, and it caused a curse to come on the land. The fact that they didn't wait on God, they were in such a hurry, it caused Israel a bunch of trouble in the future. Don't you know, Joshua, learned from that. It actually caused disruption in the camp and caused some division in the camp because of this promise that they had made to the Gibeonites. I know two families, one of them in our own church, the other one in New Zealand. I'm friends with both families. They both invested in this thing. These guys came, and it's like, “We've come because of the name of the Lord your God.” This is a Christian company, and they showed all these charts and all these things, “This is God's end-time way to finance the gospel of the Kingdom. This is all Christian, and it's a sure thing.” To both families, “But the opportunity's not going to be here forever.” If you're pressured to do something now, now, now, you'd better back off. You'd better take time to wait on God. Both families unwisely invested almost everything they had, and both of them leveraged their homes.

## Leadership Lessons from the Life of Joshua

It turns out, both of them were scams. The people who were doing it weren't Christians. They used all the Christian lingo and had all the data and all of this stuff. The people in our church lost everything. Lost their home, lost all their savings, lost it all. The family in New Zealand did get their home back because the authorities got involved, but they still lost a lot, and they went through hell. We can learn from Joshua's failures. Learn from somebody else's failure. You don't have time to make all the mistakes yourself. But here is the point. Joshua did a lot of things right, but he had his share of setbacks and mistakes. But because he learned from them, he ended up on top. One of the lessons he learned has to do with our next word, the fourth word, and that is formulas. Everybody say, "Formulas." Consider Jericho. Think about the crazy instructions that God gave. "Circle the city six days and don't say anything. On the seventh day, shout, and the walls will fall down." It makes no sense. It's just crazy. After they've been defeated at Ai, God now says, "You need to give it a second go now that you realize the trouble is with you, not with Me, and you've got it sorted out." He gives them instructions about Ai. This is what God says in Joshua 8:1 NKJV,

<sup>1</sup> Now the Lord said to Joshua: "Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed; take all the people of war with you, and arise, go up to Ai. See, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, his people, his city, and his land."

That's virtually the same thing, the same language that God used for Jericho. "I've given the city to you. I've given its king to you. It's yours. I've given it to you." Now, they're doing it the right way. God says, "I've given it to you." Now Jericho was singular. It was odd. It was wholly supernatural. But it was not a formula to be used for every city. They didn't go march around the city of Ai. In fact, God gave them what some people would call natural means to defeat Ai.

Here's God's instructions, "You take the major part of the army, go hide them in the forest behind the city. Then you take the rest of your force and come against the main gates, just like you did last time. They're going to come out and fight you, and I want you to run away from them like you're being defeated. They're going to think this is just like before. They're going to send the army out after you. When they do that, bring all the army up from the forest behind, and go take the city. Once you've taken the city, light a signal fire. Then once our troops see the signal fire, they're going to turn. Then you're going to come out of the city, and you catch them," in what's actually a common military tactic called a pincer movement. "You'll catch in between and you'll squash them." It's exactly what they did. Common military terms. In one sense, there is nothing supernatural about it. There's no shouting. There are no walls supernaturally falling down. It's a completely different way. Joshua didn't use the formula for Jericho anywhere else.

I was doing a meeting in Hemet, California, 40, maybe 44 years ago. It was in a place called the Neighborhood Center. I don't know, we maybe had 75 people there, something like that. And this woman comes up. I've preached, and I've got a prayer line. People are coming up to get prayed for. I'm laying hands on people. This woman comes up and says, "I'm partially paralyzed on this side of my face, and I have no feeling at all on this side of my face." I had a quick impression, and almost before I knew what I was doing, I went, "Bang!" I slapped her on that side of her face. Yes, I did. I slapped her hard. My handprint is on the side of her face. Her eyes got big, and I'm thinking to myself, "Oh God, oh God, oh God, oh God, oh God. God, I hope that was You. I hope that was You. I hope that was You. I hope that was You." She says, "Can I have the microphone, please?" I gave her the microphone. She turned around. Everybody's looking. Everyone is stunned. She said, "Several years ago, a man struck me in the face, and I became partially paralyzed. I've had no feeling." She turned around and said, "But this man is of God. He just hit me, and all the feelings came back to my face, and the

## Leadership Lessons from the Life of Joshua

paralysis is gone. I'm healed." She started shouting. The place went crazy. Now it's been 44 years. I've never done that again. We didn't start "slap your face" healing services. "Come get in the line. We'll slap your face. If it doesn't work the first time, turn the other cheek, and we'll slap that one too." No, one time. One time, and we didn't make a doctrine out of it. Didn't use it as some formula. Thank goodness. Joshua learned that you can't put God in a box.

When I was in Bible college, there was a girl who lived down the hall from me, and this is actually before I met Janet. I'm down there. She is making dinner for the two of us one night, and she starts sharing with me this deep financial need she has. She says, "I'm just trusting God." I'm sitting there thinking, waiting for her to make dinner, and I'm thinking, "I actually have that much money in my bank account." I said, "I forgot something in my apartment. I'll be right back." I go down the hallway, go into my apartment, and I wrote a check to cover her need. I came back, and I put it on the table. She said, "What's that?" I said, "It's a gift." She looked at it and said, "I'm not taking that." I said, "What do you mean?" She said, "I'm trusting God." I said, "Wait a minute. Were you expecting a parrot to land on your shoulder with a bag of money?" She said, "No, but you knew about my need." I said, "Okay, so God is not allowed to meet your need through somebody who knows about it or somebody who is a friend?" She said, "Well, I guess He could." I said, "Well, you're dumb if you don't take it. Because it felt like God put it in my heart to give that to you. You don't need to pay me back. It's yours."

Sometimes we've just got these narrow parameters that in our mind it's the only way that God can work. You cannot reduce God down to a formula. He is not limited to the tiny parameters of human thinking. He will fulfill His Word, but He does it according to the counsel of His own will, not according to the counsel of my will or your will. We just need to pray, agree, and trust Him, and then let Him work it out however He chooses to work it out—through whatever avenue, through whatever vessels He wants to use. Don't try to reduce God to a formula. In fact, I know some people when you pray, you're just spouting formulas. You need to connect with your Creator. Now, there are certain faith principles certainly that can be applied in virtually every situation, but God is not a formula. It's not about having faith in a formula. It's about having faith in a person. His name is Jesus Christ. It brings me to the fifth and the final word. I'm almost done. This will be quick. That's the word family. Joshua 24:15 NKJV. Joshua speaking,

<sup>15</sup> "If it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

There are some people in here—Joshua said, "As for me and my house." You are content that your house is serving God, but you're not all in. I'm talking to some of the men here. You want your kids to go to Christian school. You want them to go to heaven, but you're just doing your thing, and you know you are not close to God. Joshua said, "As for me and my house," sir, it's got to start with you. God is calling you to go all in. Have some courage and give your heart and soul to Jesus Christ. Start living like a believer. You're just here for a little while, my friend. This life is a vapor that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away. You need to give your all for Jesus while you can. The truth is, all of the other things we shared today— they're meaningless unless you get this one right. You need to choose to serve the Lord. You need to be His first of all, because if you're not His, it doesn't matter what you agree with or don't agree with as far as faith is concerned.

## Leadership Lessons from the Life of Joshua

You're not going to learn the lessons and have them in your heart that Joshua's life teaches us, unless you're the Lord's first of all. That is the most important issue ever. I'm going to take a moment, then I'm going to let you go, but we want to pray. If it helps you to close your eyes when you pray, you can do it but only if you want to. I like to. Sometimes it helps to just block out distraction. I know for a fact there are some men in here, you're doing okay as far as your family goes, as far as your work goes, but your spiritual life is a mess.

You need to sell out to Jesus today. In fact, if you're in the house and you've never made Jesus the Lord of your life. If you're out on the plaza and you've never committed your life to Jesus Christ or wherever you happen to be watching me right now or listening to me. We quoted the verse early on in the message, "If you confess with your mouth the lordship of Jesus and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you'll be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness or right standing with God, and with the mouth confession is made resulting in salvation." You need to put heart and lips together when it comes to the lordship of Jesus. And here's the thing, *Lord* means "boss."

Confess Him as Lord, it means boss. It means, "I'm willing to die to my rights of independent living and submit my life totally to You, Jesus." The person who does that will be saved. If you've never done it, I'm going to lead you in a simple prayer. If you're a backslider, it's time for you to come home. I want you to pray as well. Again, I say it many times, the only thing I can do is give you the words to say. Only you can wrap a sincere heart around them. Only you can speak those words to God by the choice of your will. Even as Joshua said, "You choose, you choose who you're going to serve." Would you pray with me right now? God is looking on every heart in here and outside on the plaza. Let's just talk to God for a minute. Say, "Oh God". Say it out loud,

Oh God, I know that You see me and that You know everything about me. You know my weaknesses. You know my failures. You know the things I'm ashamed of. You know the things I love. Thank You that You see me. Thank You for sending Your Son Jesus Christ to die for my sins. I believe that as Jesus hung upon the cross, the penalty for all my sin was laid upon Him. He died in my place. I believe He was raised from the dead. Right now I make a choice. Jesus, I choose to serve You. I believe with my heart, and I say with my mouth that You are my Lord. It's in Your Mighty name I pray. Amen. Amen.

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