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Joshua 1:1-2

"Joshua, A Man Prepared by God"

January 4, 2017

Let's open our Bibles this evening to Joshua 1:1. We're going to do two verses tonight. Verse 1, "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: '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.' "

You know, one of the best ways to practically learn how God seeks to work in your life is to study, in the Bible, how God ministered in the lives of others. And the Lord does give us these characters to look at so that we might better understand how He would like to work in our lives. In lieu of our commitment to study Joshua next and go through the whole book together, I thought it might be a good introduction tonight to consider how the Lord called this man to take over for Moses. Back in the thirty-fourth chapter of Deuteronomy, which was the last book we did before Hebrews 11, it says in verse 9, "Now Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him; so the children of Israel heeded him, and did as the LORD had commanded Moses. But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, in all the signs and wonders which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt, before Pharaoh, before all his servants, and in all his land, and by all that mighty power and all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel."

Joshua is a guy that we have forty-plus years of history on. There aren't too many folks in the Bible where God takes you from - I won't say he was a young kid, but I'll say he was younger than some - and by the time that he gets into the land and God begins to use him, his buddy Caleb was 85. So, this was an old-time guy by the time these next several years go by. Caleb is another faithful guy, but he's only mentioned a couple of times; he kind of pops up. But Joshua is a guy that is laid out for us in literally the whole approach out of the book of Exodus to the time of the gathering of the people into the land that we are at tonight. And, in many ways, Joshua is kind of like us. He was a man that had a lot of trials in his life. He was a fellow that, as a young adult, had a challenge growing up. He was always standing apart from the crowd, it seemed. He wasn't a guy that really fit in very well. He was a fellow who had a pronounced consistency in his walk with God that few others

(in those millions of folks) showed. His desire to get to know the Lord better did not seem to decrease with time. And maybe the single greatest attribute in his life was he hungered to know the Lord. He's probably an ideal portrait, biblically, of how God readies each of us for service to Him, and it is this compilation of teaching, and then experiences, these hands-on trials, this willingness to learn, and then these simple kinds of life experiences. And you can follow Joshua's life from the exodus, from Passover - that first Passover forward, if you like. And, over the long run, God had plans for him, great plans. Imagine following Moses. There was never a guy like Moses. That's what we read in the last chapter (Deuteronomy 34:10). No one like him. "Here, Joshua, you're next. You'll not ever be a Moses, but you'll be the man that God has called you to be." And he would lead the people into the land. He'd spend seven and a half years taking them into battles. He would then hand over, if you will, the responsibility of cleaning up the areas after God had assigned them a portion, and he would live many more years beyond that, just kind of in the shadows. It was forty-plus years of preparation for seven and a half years of work. It may not have sounded worth it, but it was.

And God has something in mind for you. And it's always good at the beginning of a new year to ask God what He wants to do with you this year. This could be your last year on the earth. You don't know. Or the last week. What does God want to do with us? What are His plans?

We know from the Scriptures (and you can write them down) - I'm going to turn to some places rather than you trying to follow. We know that Joshua was born in Egypt and that his mom and dad were slaves, that they were victims of the Pharaoh. Exodus 1:8 says of a Pharaoh "who did not know Joseph." And though the first thirty years were relatively pain free for the nation of Israel - young nation, seventy-plus people - after that it was nothing but trouble and difficulty, and it only got worse. As a young boy, his name wasn't Joshua; his name was Oshea. And, I suspect that he would see his dad come home late at night (like all of the other kids) from the fields, exhausted from toiling under wicked taskmasters. He would have heard the dinner conversations, the prayer, the frustration, the fear. There was a constant threat of death. And one night in his young life would have been particularly memorable - that night of the Passover, when the eldest son in each home was marked for death unless the blood of the lamb was applied to his house. We are told the story, there in Exodus 12, and the LORD made a declaration there to Moses and to the people. He said (verse 12), "For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man

and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD." And, as this tenth plague (in a matter of about nine months), fell upon Egypt - where Israel had been held for 430 years - this last plague of the series of "Let-My-people-go's" was going to lead them to let the people go. And the death of the firstborn would have been and had, I guess, a special significance for Joshua because, according to 1 Chronicles 7:27, he was the oldest one in the family. It didn't mean he was a kid. He could have been an old guy in his thirties or forties, but he was the oldest one in the family. And I can just imagine him. Oh, I don't know, my imagination runs wild. But if I'm the oldest in the family, and I hear this from the Lord, "Aren't you out there supervising putting the blood on? A little bit more on the door would be good right now," you would be wanting to be sure that it was done just so because that was your only hope. And I can just imagine him lying in bed that first night, with the screams outside from the various families, and you, with your heart racing, unable to fall asleep. And yet God faithfully spared him His promise. And at least for Joshua, that left him never the same. Passover changed him forever. "God spared my life." And it meant something to him.

Then came this glorious march out of Egypt with God's high hand following after the man of God that Moses had called to Himself. And Moses was going to be his role model, at least for the next forty years. At least for the next forty years. And a mentor. And Joshua would watch his courage and his boldness. He would thrill and revel in his relationship to God. He would listen to the way he prayed, and he would watch the way he handled opposition from even his own people. And I suspect that, even the complaints that his mom and dad probably brought home when Moses first got there - about how he was only making things worse - certainly by the time they got across the Red Sea, that couldn't be what they felt anymore. Those had been laid to rest. So you have this pre-dawn exodus, and soon Joshua, in amazement, watches Moses raise the rod of God again, and the Red Sea parts, and those fearful Egyptians are no longer a problem, and Joshua marks it down in his heart before the LORD. And he would settle early on in his life what many, unfortunately, people don't conclude at all - that God could be trusted, that He could be obeyed, that He could be counted on. And he made that peace pretty early on, as you read through the book of Exodus. And he was also convinced of something else. He was convinced that Moses was the man that God had sent to deliver them and that Moses was the guy he should stick to. And he did. And you'll find him latched on to Moses as early as, I think, Exodus 24:13. You will read of him, "So Moses rose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up to the mountain

of God." But it was always Moses' assistant, and you'll read that quite often through the accounts as you get to these books that lead up to the place that we are tonight. He will be called, by the time you get to the book of Numbers, a choice man of Moses', "Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, one of his choice men" (Numbers 11:28); a man that was chosen and wanted and Moses longed to have around. Young guy. Just staring out. He had sat, he learned, he arose, he served. He was available to the LORD. He took the second place to Moses. He was out of the limelight more often than he was in it, but he was aspiring to serve. And he took that position, and, in that position, learned everything he would need to know so by the time we read tonight that God says, "All right. Arise, and lead the people in," Joshua said, "Yes, Sir. I can do that, and I know that You'll be with us."

One of the questions I hope you can ask yourself, in terms of what we will study in this book, is - Who do you learn from? Who do you look up to? Who is close enough to you in your life that you have someone that you can rely upon to say, "That's not what the Bible says," or, "This is what the Scriptures tell you." Who's discipling you? It's good to have someone to encourage you, someone you rely upon and trust in. Joshua certainly had that for decades. And not only who do you serve under but who looks up to you? Whom do you disciple? Who are you taking under your arm and saying, "Look, this is what God has taught me"? The most prescribed method of growth, in the Bible, for people, for churches, for fellowships is discipleship. And you will read, as you go through the Old Testament, about the schools of the prophets and the schools of ministry. And apparently they had some success. But I'll tell you what. You won't find any big names in the Bible that you can relate to and can tell their stories coming out of those schools. You will, rather, find them coming alongside other famous names - like Moses and Joshua. So the schooling certainly helps, but the discipleship really helped. And they had their place, like I said. But the top leaders in the Scriptures, that bore the most fruit, came out of discipleship relationships, not schooling kind of relationships. If you watch Jesus with His twelve men, He spent a lot of time talking to big crowds. He taught multitudes, but He took under His wing twelve guys. In fact, if you read through the New Testament, and especially through the gospels, I think one of the things that you learn from Jesus is that Jesus' ministry of discipleship was "withness;" not witness, but "withness." These guys were just "with" Jesus. They watched what He did, they watched what He said, they went where He went, they watched Him take on all-comers, how He handled the opposition, how He dealt with the enemy, how He had compassion for the people, how He was up late at night and early in the morning. They were "with" Him. They

were with Him in every circumstance. They oftentimes sat, if you read through the gospels, and talked about what they learned, what their impressions were, what they took away from it, how the Scriptures began to be applied to them. And they grew in that relationship of "witness" - what they saw, what they learned, what they now knew about the Lord. I mean, ultimately, discipleship is three sentences: I do it, you watch; you do it, I'll watch; and then you do it, and let someone else watch. That's really the way the Lord worked. He took men with Him to watch Him work. The pastor's, certainly, greatest work is discipleship. It's true for overseers as well.

So Joshua becomes a disciple of Moses, a guy that literally says, "I want to learn everything you know. I want to go where you go, and I want to do what you do. I want to spend time with you." And he becomes his assistant and one of his choicest men, one that stood out, if you will, among the rest.

As time passed, Joshua continued to make pretty smart choices in faith. You don't find him anywhere but humble. He's always taking the lower spot. One day he will find himself well-prepared, as we get to Joshua, to lead. He stands out far above any contemporary that he had. There's no one that is his equal in terms of discipleship or learning from the LORD. And Moses recognized Joshua's heart, his determined commitment, his steadfastness - even when others fell. And I don't know what his age might have been, but he stayed on track. He did it quietly. He wasn't moved by others. He just had a personal conviction and commitment to the LORD that caused him to just not look to the left or to the right. And Moses kept his eye on this young man, and when needs appeared and the doors opened, he was the one that Moses would call upon with confidence because Joshua had proven himself; and he continued. Time will tell. Right? And it did.

I'm always very interested in guys like Timothy in the New Testament, where Paul, who knew so many folks he devoted a whole chapter in Romans to saying goodbye and hello to folks by name. He was everybody's buddy. But he was able to write of Timothy, to the Philippians 2:20-22, that he had no one who was as like-minded as Timothy after thirty years of ministry; someone who would sincerely "care for your state like I do. Everyone," he said, "seeks their own way. They're interested not in the things of Christ. But he has a proven character. He's a son in the faith. He served with me in the gospel."

And that's what Joshua proved himself to be with Moses. He proved himself to be a guy that you could count on, and he did it forty years later, and he's still in that position of second-in-command, not an easy place to be - especially if you have aspirations. But his only aspiration was to serve the LORD. And I'm not sure that he even thought that one day he'd take over. There's no indication that he's going, "Now, Moses, you're gettin' old, dude. Remember me." There's none of that going on at all.

When the children of Israel finally come out of Egypt and through the Red Sea, they came to a place (in Exodus 17) called Rephidim. They were just out of range. They had begun to walk by faith. They came to a place where there wasn't any water. The people began immediately to chide Moses, and their main word to him was, "Is the LORD really with us or among us, or not? Are we going to die here?" And Moses called the place Meribah, place of strife. The Rock, Jesus, was smitten, and water came out. It's this beautiful picture of God giving water to those who look to Him by faith. But as the water came out to take care of the children of Israel, in Exodus 17:8 it says that the Amalekites came out to fight them. There was another enemy waiting for them on their journey. These guys were descendants of Esau; Amalek was his grandson, in fact. They were perennial enemies of Israel. When Moses is about to die (in Deuteronomy 25), he said to the people, "Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you were coming out of Egypt, how he met you on the way and attacked your rear ranks, all the stragglers at your rear, when you were tired and weary; and he did not fear God" (verses 17-18). "These guys were after us, trying to take out the weakest of us, and they were against us."

They are, in the Old Testament (these Amalekites), a type of the flesh. They speak about Christians who walk with God having a constant warfare walking in the Spirit. And the warfare started when the water was poured out of the Rock. I'll tell you when you start to have trouble with your flesh - once you get saved, when the Spirit of God comes in. Until then, you just kind of work it out like everyone else. But the minute you give your life to Jesus, then the flesh begins to battle you.

And it did here, in Exodus 17. And you remember the story that Moses went up with the rod that God had given him, and he held his arm over the battlefield. And guess who he sent to fight? Joshua. "Hey, Joshua, why don't you lead the army?" Well, there was no army. There was absolutely no army. These guys were ill-

prepared, outnumbered, no battle skills and no weapons. They were running for their lives. They did have some food and some jewelry. Guess they could have thrown it at the enemy. And Joshua, without asking a question, says, "I'll go." But it was a tremendous ask of faith. He did it without question. He would learn he could rely upon God to work, even without his help. He would learn, early on, whose side God was on; where his strength lay. He learned by doing, not just hearing. He risked everything he could. And Moses got tired. He was an older guy, and the arm would fall, and fortunately God sent two other people to hold up his arms - Aaron and Hur - just so that blessing of God would be over the battlefield. And those lessons were driven deep into young Joshua's heart. But it wasn't going to be forty years till he took over. But God was preparing him for a place He had prepared for him.

Though the LORD would tell them, after this battle was over, that they would never get away, in this life, from battling Amalek (he would always be your enemy), Joshua learned that he could overcome the enemy in the power of God. There's an interesting verse in Exodus 17:14, when the battle was over, that the LORD says to Moses - and I'll read it to you - it says, " 'Write this for a memorial in the book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven.' And Moses built an altar and called its name, Jehovah Nissi, The-LORD-Is-My-Banner; for he said, 'Because the LORD has sworn: the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.' " However, the LORD is the banner. You march against the enemy, the flesh, under His name, you win. What's interesting is that the LORD said to Moses, after the battle, "Write it down somewhere, and go over it again with Joshua. Make sure that this lesson is something that stays in his heart." And, as they built the memorial declaring that the LORD was providing, and they could march under His protection and under His control, Joshua was singled out by the LORD to hear that lesson again. "Go over it with him again, Moses. Tell Joshua to take this to heart." "I can go forth in victory." Joshua learned it in the trenches, up close and personal. He had to fight an enemy without hesitancy. He believed that God could do it. And then, when he learned it, God said, "Now, drive that thought home." And He said to him, here in verse 14 of Exodus 17, as he tasted the first taste of victory where he took a leading role, "Just remember who gave you the victory." I don't know how he went to sleep that night, but, as a young guy growing up in the faith, I imagine that he must have been thanking the LORD for getting him through that day. These were mean-spirited, well-armed, well-trained desert animals, and they were facing a people that were just leaving 430 years of captivity, who had really no training at

all. So Joshua thinks about the overcoming power of God, and it just caused him to draw even more close to Him day in and day out.

By the time they get to Mount Sinai (in Exodus 24), Joshua is still Moses' assistant. In fact we read, there in verse 12, "Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Come up to Me on the mountain and be there; and I will give you tablets of stone, and the law and commandments which I have written, that you may teach them.' So Moses arose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up to the mountain of God." Now, we are told early on in that chapter that the LORD had called all of the elders up to meet with Him. In fact, verse 1 of chapter 24 of Exodus says that the LORD said, "Bring Aaron, bring Nadab, bring Abihu." They brought a bunch of folks up - seventy elders before the LORD. But then, as God met with them and talked to them about keeping the people back and that the people shouldn't come near the altar, "Tell the folks to stay away from the mountain, God is holy, and they're not, and they have to reverence it," the LORD, on the mountaintop, called Moses to Himself. "I want to give you the law." And Moses immediately took Joshua with him, and they went up the mountain top. And then you read there, in verse 12, that the LORD called them up, and they sat there for almost a week before the LORD came and said, "I want you to come up on the seventh day and meet with Me alone." And so the LORD had left Joshua stuck between Moses - who went up into the cloud where God's presence was - and Aaron down below, with others who were left as elders in charge of the 2½ million folks. And you find this isolation that the LORD brought upon Joshua's life. A week with Moses, waiting upon the LORD, away from the people. I don't know what they were doing. But now he's left between God and Moses above and the people and the elders below. And he would sit there for almost five and a half weeks, by himself, alone. He was forced to think about his life. He was forced to analyze the choices he was making. He was forced to wait upon the LORD and wait upon his mentor and wait upon Moses to come back, willingly waiting thirty-three days as the law was being written out for Moses by the LORD Himself. He doesn't know what's going on. He just knows Moses disappeared up that way, and he was told to wait right here.

The next, I think, seven chapters or so (in Exodus) - beginning in chapter 25 - just tell of everything that the LORD gave to Moses in that meeting so that you'll read about the wonderful things that God had planned in bringing the people to Himself: the buildings, the tabernacle, the places of worship, the anointing oil, the incense - everything that had to do with God bringing the people, a sinful people, to Himself.

And Moses gets the glory of meeting with God, and Joshua gets to sit by himself. He's the only guy that's put there alone.

Meanwhile, down on the floor of the valley, Aaron is not doing such a good job at all. And you know how the story goes, there in Exodus 32, but it is Aaron and others who have been left behind; and over a period of five and a half weeks or so, they've actually forsaken what they had learned all of the last year - the nine months with the LORD's plagues, the travel, if you will, to Mount Sinai (they would be here for a year). They had just forgotten everything! Nothing had made sense. Nine months of plagues, six weeks of travel, and now they're waiting for the LORD to speak to them. So, instead of leading, Aaron - tremendously weak - second in command, by the way, since this whole thing began (not Joshua, he was just an assistant), is talked (by the people) into going back to the old ways of worship in Egypt. And he makes them a place of worship and a thing of worship and a golden calf, and he places it in front of the people, and, "This is your god that brought you out of Egypt, that you worshipped." And, as all of this transpires below, Joshua is still in the middle - waiting upon God. And Moses is still with God - doing the things that God had asked him to do. Joshua so strong in faith; Aaron so weak in faith.

We read in verse 1 of chapter 32 of Exodus, "Now when the people saw that Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people gathered together to Aaron, and said to him, 'Come, make us gods that shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.' And Aaron said to them, 'Break off the golden earrings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.' So all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them to Aaron. And he received the gold from their hand, and he fashioned it with an engraving tool, and made a molded calf. Then they said, 'This is your god, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!' So when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made a proclamation and said, 'Tomorrow is a feast to the LORD.' Then they rose early on the next day, offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." And it all happened down in the valley as Moses is with the LORD, and Joshua is stuck in the middle. Well, about that time, it is the LORD (back in that place high above the clouds) that says to Moses (verse 7), " 'Go, get down! For your people whom you brought out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves. They have made themselves a molded calf, and worshiped it and sacrificed to it.' " And Moses immediately prays for them, as God declares His anger; and then he

reassigns them to the LORD and he says, "Well, they're Your people. They're really not my people." And God, in verse 7, calls them "your people." In verse 9, He just calls them "this people." And when Moses gets done praying in verses 11, 12 and 14, He goes, "All right. My people." And Moses is doing the interceding, even as he's an example of Jesus; and Joshua is still in the middle.

Joshua had heard the noise coming up from the valley floor. He feared maybe the people were under attack, and yet he didn't move. He stayed where he was told to stay. He didn't feel comfortable enough acting out on his own. He was under the leadership of Moses. He kept that place. He comes and sees Moses coming out, and he says, "We've got to hurry. I think the people are under attack." And Moses corrects his young protégé, and he says, "Well, they're not under attack at all. What you're hearing is wickedness, and the people are worshipping idols." And he got angry, and he ran down with Joshua and heard the noise, and, "This is not the cry of defeat but the noises of singing that I hear." He took himself down the mountain, and the people were dancing naked before this thing, the calf which they had made, burning in their midst. And Moses just lost it. He broke the only original copy that he had of the law, written by God's own hand, and he dealt with those who were there.

Joshua had waited faithfully alone the same amount of time the people in the valley had, but he was more faithful. So he passes the test. Fit for the Master's use. You can leave him on his own. He's going to do the right thing. Not just when people are watching. He's going to do the right thing. And Joshua had determined he would follow the LORD and be pressed in to walking with God. And he watched Moses pressing judgment and calling for a commitment from the people; he watched as 3000 people die in a plague in God's anger, and Moses is on his face - in tears - saying, "LORD, spare them!" And Joshua learns about the holiness of God and the soft-heartedness of God's servants. And he still ain't doing anything but helping Moses out.

In chapter 33 of Exodus, the LORD said, "For this behavior, I just decided I'm not going to go with you guys forward anymore. I'll just send an Angel with you, and the Angel can help you. But I'm not going. I can't be with these stiff-necked folks." And the people heard the bad news, and they took off their joyful garments, and they prayed and fell on their faces, and God said, "You stay right there. Let Me think about it." And He left them there for some time, and Moses did something very interesting. He took the tent of meeting - actually his own tent

outside the camp - and he set it up outside, where the people were encamped together (the way the LORD had put them) and called the tent the tent of meeting. And he said to the people, "If you want to meet with God, it's going to require a personal choice, and you're going to have to walk outside by yourself. This isn't a group thing anymore. This is an individual responsibility." Just like Jesus was crucified outside the camp.

Well, the door was open, the invitation delivered. And, as Moses went out often to meet with the LORD, and the glory of God would descend upon that tent, and the LORD's presence would meet with him there, the people would, at their tent doors, just fall on their faces, moved by the fact God was speaking to Moses. And God was ministering to him. In fact, it says in verse 11 of Exodus 33 that "the LORD spoke to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. And he would return to the camp," but then you read this, "but his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, did not depart from the tabernacle." Moses went out and prayed and then went and messed with the people. Joshua said, "Well I think I'll just hang out here where the LORD is." And he separates himself from everyone, if you will. His fellowship with the LORD was what he hungered for more than the crowds did, wasn't moved by public opinion, didn't really care what Aaron would or wouldn't do. His walk was determined by his personal relationship with God. So he was ready for God to use him. Joshua saw no need to go anywhere other than the place where he could seek the LORD and be near His presence.

And I'll tell you - if you want God to use your life, find some time to spend with Him. There are some people - they only show up when they need something. "Oh, I need it," then I'm going to be there when I need something. I saw somebody once checking a schedule in their ministry, maybe a few years ago, and I heard this, "Oh, good. I'm not on the schedule. I'm outta here." And I wanted to just tell them they could just keep going because that's really no reason and no way to serve the Lord. Right?

But Joshua was a hungry guy. He served, he prayed, he loved God. He did those things by that love you would expect to find in those hearts that God had touched. So, his idea of ministry was, "I just want to do it for His sake." Same for us. If you're in ministry, and you show up late, and you don't bother calling, and you excuse your slothfulness by saying, "Well, I'm volunteering," then you should probably quit. Joshua went where God was even if it meant separating himself from others. And he didn't make big fanfare, he didn't preach, he didn't carry a

chip on his shoulder. Moses said, "I'm going out here to pray," and Joshua was, "I'm going out to pray." And Moses said, "I'm going back in," and Joshua said, "I'll hang out here for a while." He's a disciple that you'd want to have in your life and in your ministry life.

Jumping all the way ahead to Numbers 11, where the report of Joshua continued, Moses got to a place where the people were so hard on him that he just wanted to die. In fact, you remember the story. But, when you hear a man of God saying, "LORD, if You love me, kill me," he's having a bad day! And that's what Moses said to the LORD. "I'd like to end it all. If You love me.....and I've been faithful." But God had other ideas. He told him to pick seventy guys. He said, "I'm going to take a portion of the Spirit that I've put upon you, and I'm going to put it upon them, and they're going to help you." And so Moses went, and he picked seventy guys known among the tribes - faithful men, had a good reputation - told them the next day to meet him outside by the tabernacle and gather together, and sixty-eight of them showed up. And there was this outpouring of God's Spirit upon these sixty-eight, and they began to prophesy, and they began to speak. And the LORD was moving on them. But there were two guys - the Blues Brothers, Eldad and Medad (that was their names, it's right there in your Bibles) - the Spirit fell upon them, but they hadn't shown up like everyone else. They'd stayed home. But God was moving, and you could tell God's presence, and they began to speak, and God was moving upon their hearts as well. And when someone came and told Moses, Joshua (for the first time you find him angry) felt like his boss had been disrespected, and he said, "That's wrong that they didn't come when they were told to come. Tell them they can't speak like this anymore. You just tell them they lost their privilege." He was trying to defend old Moses, and Moses said, "Oh, no, no, Joshua. Don't be upset for my sake. I wish to God that everyone could have the Spirit upon them and that all of them could speak by the Spirit of the LORD. Don't be envious for my sake." Moses wasn't threatened in God's work by someone else not really following orders, if you will. And his desire was that everyone would be moved by the Spirit, something that now can happen in the New Testament. You get saved, God's Spirit moves in you. So, Joshua added this to his understanding of God's ways.

Well then you get to Numbers 13, and there's that famous story of twelve spies chosen to spy out Canaan. They finally get to the border of the Land of Promise. And it's an interesting concept if you'll read the first couple of verses of chapter 13 that the LORD said to Moses, "I want you to pick twelve guys to go spy out the

land, but I'd like you to pick one man from every tribe who is a leader." So these twelve men that were picked by Moses were leaders amongst God's people. Now imagine, since you know what ten of their attitudes and outlooks were, that there wasn't much faith going on in this group of 2½ million folks. Their leaders were worldly. They lacked a lot of confidence in God. But then there was Joshua, and then there was Caleb. These two men certainly showed tremendous faith. We've taken Joshua through several years of experiences in just the half an hour that we've talked about him. But there were at least ten guys who were in charge of hundreds of thousands of folks, overseers who weren't spiritual leaders and looked at and analyzed things not by faith but by worldly standards. So Joshua gets picked; Caleb gets picked. To me, those would be natural choices. But notice what God is sending them to do. It's a dangerous job; an enemy large and strong in a land that they've never seen; behind enemy lines; due diligence, certainly, but dangerous; traveling with eleven others, ten of whom who had, like I said, little faith in the LORD. And Joshua would find himself with just little support. But Joshua's got what a lot of these other guys don't - he sees the LORD in all of this stuff. He's got his eyes on God. And so for him, this was a different trip than for everyone else. It is here that Moses changes Oshea's name to Hoshea - from "salvation" to Joshua, "God is salvation." And he gets sent off on another mission, running headlong into danger, willingly; gets his instructions, spends forty days going through the southern mountain areas of Kirjath Arba, the place that, eventually, Caleb, when he is 85, will demand Joshua give him and his sons because God had promised it to him through Moses. Forty days of running around enemy territory. They come back after nearly six weeks, and the report of the men and their testimony focused on the difficulty of the land, on the height of the walls, on the hugeness of the people, on the numbers of the army. And the report to the people was, "We're going to die," and it left the people terrified. And Caleb stood up, and he said, "Look, let's just trust God. He's always been faithful. Look how far He's brought us." But that wasn't rationale enough for people that had turned away from God.

So Joshua and Caleb, in chapter 14 of Numbers, make their pitch for faith and hope, how they knew that God would deliver, and you could trust Him. And while they were speaking, it says the crowd busied themselves gathering rocks to kill them (verse 10). "We can trust the LORD." "Yeah, okay, you keep talkin'. I've just got a few more rocks here to go." These are parents of the children whom Joshua would eventually lead into Canaan. But here he stood by the LORD again, literally.

He risked his neck. His own people wanted to kill him. This is on-the-job training, and it's amazing.

And I'll tell you what. When people start talking about stoning you, you'll quickly learn which belief you'll die for and which ones you'll think are debatable. My wife and I went to see the movie "Silence" yesterday over at the ArcLight. The movie, I think, is coming out everywhere a week from Friday. But it's a movie - Scorsese did it - about Portuguese Catholic priests ministering in the 1600s in Japan at a time when the Japanese were outlawing Christianity at every turn. And the Catholics were on the forefront of the brutality that they suffered. It's rated "R." I wouldn't normally recommend movies, but it's just for the violence against the believer. It's a very interesting story. And not all the doctrine is right, but it's Scorsese, so.....it's not Chuck Smith. But I think you'd enjoy it. It's 2½ hours long. It's hard. It's talking. There's not a lot of action. But it's a great story about the sacrifice that you may have to make to serve the Lord and how far you're willing to go. And, when people want to stone you, I think you'd just go, "All right. All right. All right. We don't have to go in." But Joshua took his stand, and the LORD would later refer to Joshua and to Caleb (in Numbers 32:12) as two men who were wholly committed to the LORD. He would say to His people, "Now here are two guys you can depend upon."

So the wandering for forty years taught Joshua the price of unbelief and the holiness of God. And for all of those years, as well, Joshua just loved the LORD. He gave himself to it - watched the whole generation of people die. And now he's with Moses, and Moses is being taken, and the LORD is saying, "Joshua, you go now and lead the people." But forty years later, you read here (as we read tonight) Joshua is ordained and anointed and recognized publicly as God's choice to succeed Moses. And that calling of Joshua is reiterated in Deuteronomy 31 (three or four different times) and here in Joshua, the first two verses as well. Moses' assistant finally becomes Moses, takes Moses' place and begins his leadership with God's encouragement in chapter 1, where we will do the chapter next week. I promise we won't go that slow anymore.

But he works to prepare him for forty-plus years so that he might do the impossible because he knew the God who could carry it off. In Joshua 1:1, the journey into the land for the nation of Israel begins as Moses' assistant now stands at the front. And God has a leader, and God has a people to lead. There're a lot of people who would like to lead without the cost. But think about the cost that

Joshua had to pay in terms of his life and his fellowship with God. People want titles, but they don't necessarily want to pay the price for them. They want glory without the sacrifice. Joshua, he devoted his life to caring for these folks as much as Moses did, certainly, even though he wasn't the name or the guy that you looked to. Forty years of preparation for such a time as this. Every trial and testing and battle, and watching people turn and fall, and hatred and the questions were all proving grounds for this guy to walk through so he'd be ready for what came next.

And that may very well be the kinds of things you're going through. Maybe you've had a hard year, and you wonder where the Lord is. Well, I can only believe that the Lord has something great in mind for you. I don't know what it is. If I did, I'd tell you. But I have no clue. So I'm reduced to having to step back and say here's how God always works with His people. If He's taking you through rough times, it's usually for something else that's coming down the road; something else that He wants to teach you; something else that you need to learn so that you'll be ready. And whatever God has done with you, it is certainly a preparation for you for what comes next. And if you're serious about letting God use you, those trials aren't wasted. Those are good things that put you in a position where you can actually be useful to the Lord.

I don't think Joshua could have gotten off the bus and did this. Or walked into the group of 2½ million Jews and said, "Anybody need me to take you across? I know the way." He'd have fallen apart. But he takes on - not 2½ million friendly folks, either - contentious, backbiting, disobedient.....remember, Moses wanted to kill himself. These were these folks. And yet Joshua takes them on. And God says to Joshua, "Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore you arise and go over, you and this people, to the land which I'm giving to them." And then all of chapter 1 becomes not only an encouragement to Joshua that he can do this thing, but he gets orders from the LORD to tell them how to go and what to do. And the LORD even says to him, "They listened to Moses. They're going to listen to you. I'm telling you why - because I'm going to make sure that happens." Because Joshua had a lot of hang-ups. "I'm not Moses." That's right. We read that in chapter 34. "You're not Moses." "They're not going to listen to me." "Oh, yes, they will." "Why?" "Because I just told you they will." And Joshua went, "Fine, good enough. The LORD has told me. I'll act upon it."

So I don't know what your plans are for this year. I don't know what your goals are. I don't know if you've got Scriptures that you walk with every day for a year or just plans that God has been laying out for you or desires of your heart that you need to pursue. I would just encourage you to let God do that stuff. There's a lot to be done. We don't have that much time, do we? And the Lord could come back this year. So we want to be ready and available and willing and useful. And sometimes it takes all those other things to get you ready. Right? It's training camp. It's exhibition games. And now the real game begins. For Joshua, this is like, "Here's the ball, buddy. Start to run. It's time for everything you've learned."

Next week, we will pick up chapter 1. I promise we're going to do the whole chapter. All eighteen verses.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson
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