

LIVES THAT REMIND US ABOUT GOD - Meeting Yourself In The Sacred Text - Part seven - Sunday, March 17th, 2024

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JOSHUA - THE WORD OF GOD AND THE SUCCESSFUL LIFE

Joshua 1:1-9 - "After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, [2] "Moses my servant is dead. Now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel. [3] Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses. [4] From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory. [5] No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you. [6] Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. [7] Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. [8] This 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 good success. [9] Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

"Be strong and of good courage." We are obviously to take note of those instructions because they're repeated three times in space of four verses -

Verse 6 - "Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them." - Verse 7 - "Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go." - And verse 9 - "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

The real question is ***how is Joshua supposed to do that?*** These are difficult times for him. Changes and confusion abound. Joshua is a ***new leader*** entering a ***new land*** in a totally ***new environment***. We can all place ourselves in situations where there is nothing firm that is left to stand on. Everything is new and uncertain. Mistakes are just waiting to be made. What is Joshua given to help him in his task? How will he be ***“strong and of good courage?”*** What are to be his resources?

Joshua isn't left in the dark. There are three specific instructions spelled out in **verse 8** - ***“This 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 good success.”***

- 1) **HE MUST KEEP THE WORD IN HIS MOUTH** - We would expect him to be told to keep it in ***heart***. But that's not the term chosen. This is not a text to launch the doctrine of positive confession. This text simply means Joshua was to ***talk*** about the will and way of God. This was especially important because this was a day when written texts of Scripture were virtually non-existent. ***The Word from the Lord could easily be lost sight of.***

So these words are for Joshua, but not ***just*** for Joshua. It is for the collective good of all the people he will lead. This is how they will keep the main thing the main thing. Joshua has the responsibility of making sure the people don't just give ***general*** assent to divine governance. We all love spiritual truth ***generally***. We are all holy in ***theory***.

The key issue here is not losing sight of something once learned. The only thing harder than *finding* the truth is *not losing it*. Joshua, the leader, was to insure that this did not happen. And we should all pay attention to this. The instructions to Joshua as leader are similar to those given to *parents*, and for the very same reasons - **Deuteronomy 6:4-9** - **“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. [5] You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. [6] And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. [7] You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. [8] You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. [9] You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”**

As leader, Joshua had the responsibility to keep God's authoritative commands in the front of the people's minds. They were to hear the Word of God from Joshua regularly. In any sphere of leadership, we serve best, not with our own ideas, but saturated with God's revelation.

And notice the way God warns Joshua in advance that this is no easy assignment. He is told very specifically that the call to hold any group to the Word of God is the call to heard cats. God tells Joshua he's going to have to summon *courage* every day of his life - **Verse 7** - **“Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go.”**

It takes courage because people don't like being reminded of God's Word when they're not in church - when they're more inclined to go with the will of the crowd. Then people like you and me like to pretend we **are** doing God's will and don't need to be reminded of it right now - thank you very much, Mr. Holier than thou!

We can see later on in the book just how faithfully Joshua took this task to hand - **Joshua 8:33-35** - **“And all Israel, sojourner as well as native born, with their elders and officers and their judges, stood on opposite sides of the ark before the Levitical priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord, half of them in front of Mount Gerizim and half of them in front of Mount Ebal, just as Moses the servant of the Lord had commanded at the first, to bless the people of Israel. [34] And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessing and the curse, according to all that is written in the Book of the Law. [35] There was not a word of all that Moses commanded that Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel, and the women, and the little ones, and the sojourners who lived among them.”**

We need this truth pressed home to all parents, teachers, and leaders who want to embed God's Word, both into their lives and those over whom they have influence.

- 2) **HE MUST MEDITATE ON THE WORD** - God told Joshua that in order to be strong and successful he must do this meditate on the Word ***"day and night"***. Leaders must always live in their own lives to a greater degree whatever they want to impart to those following. This is God tying Joshua's whole life to divine will.

Something else very important - Joshua, if he is to be fruitful for God, must resist the temptation to limit his attention to the Word of God to merely **religious settings**. He was to think about God's Word "**day and night,**" meaning when he was in the Tabernacle and when he wasn't - when there was a crisis and when there wasn't - when it was popular and when it wasn't - when he felt inspired and when he didn't. There was to be no compartmentalizing of Joshua's life, nor Israel's. All must be shaped and controlled by the Word of God.

This is an important point for all of us to grasp. What steps are you taking to engraft the Word into your life on Tuesday afternoon? Or Saturday evening? These are the times when battles are fought and strength is needed. Thus, this is where the Word must be engrafted through continuous meditation. Most of your really big battles aren't fought on Sunday anyway. **Meditating "day and night" brings the power of the Word to where it's needed in your life.** My mind must be constantly working to submit areas of my life that **don't seem spiritually relevant** to the authority of the Word.

This is a big part of how the influence of God's Word comes about in any heart. Meditating on it day and night implies I make a constant effort to build contextual bridges between what God's Word says and the places where most of my life happens. More than anything it meditating on God's Word means **asking the right questions at the right times**. How does the Word of God that I've read a thousand times relate to this TV show, that internet sight, this purchase, those friends and their invitation? The bridge between God's Word and your life doesn't happen just because you read your Bible today. Joshua must **meditate on it day and night**.

- 3) **HE MUST PRACTICE THE WORD OF GOD** - One of the great features of Joshua's life was the way he carried this out so faithfully. See **Joshua 23:6** - “Therefore, be very strong to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, turning aside from it neither to the right hand nor to the left....” Here we see the faithfulness of Joshua. Just before the *end* of his life he's still on message with what he received from God as the *beginning* of his leadership role. He continues to urge the people to *live their lives within the boundaries of God's Word*. He never seemed to question its *authority* or doubt its *trustworthiness*.

Notice also how deviation occurs from God's Word. We're meant to sense the *gradual compromise* of merely veering slightly to the right - just a bit - or to the left. Joshua is to make no adjustments *away* from the set course of God's Word for his life. And again, notice that this takes incredible strength and courage to do this.

Joshua shines here. Moses was now off the scene. Yet even though God initially gave the commandments to Moses, Joshua realizes God's Word must continue to be carried out, even though Moses is gone. *Practising* the Word is a good term. One learns to live it out in natural and consistent ways by constant *practice* - just as one learns over time to fill the house with music by *practising* the piano, though, at first, the lessons are hard and awkward.

- 4) **THREE PRINCIPLES TO DEVELOPING FRUITFUL MEDITATION ON THE WORD:**

- a) ***The principle of eliminating contrary counsel - Psalm 1:1-2 -***
“**Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; [2] but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.**” The central point here is fruitful meditation on the Word depends on more than the ***intake*** of the Word. What you ***eliminate*** as potential influence for your life is as crucial as what you ***receive***. The foundation for fruitfulness is laid ***before*** the Bible is opened.
- b) ***The principle of memorization of the Word - James 1:21 -***
“**Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.**” Aside from echoing principle one, James also distinguishes the Word ***implanted*** from the Word merely ***read*** or ***heard***.

The old King James Version uses the botanical term “***engrafted.***” This is the point where the life from the Word flows continuously into the mind and will. The word “***implanted***” is the Word that has capacity to still express itself long after the Bible is closed and back on the shelf.

c) ***The principle of cooperating with the work of the Holy Spirit -
John 17:17 - “Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.”***

This is the dominant reason the Scriptures are called the “***sword of the Spirit.***” This process of ***engrafting*** the Word of God in a deep and ***abiding*** manner - like one part of a plant actually passing its life into the other - is the primary way we cooperate with the Holy Spirit’s work of sanctifying our minds and affections and shaping our beings into the shape of Jesus Christ. There is nothing more important to learn than this.