

October 6, 2024 (Lesson 6)

JOSHUA'S SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT FOR LEADERSHIP

1. **Joshua Remains in the Tabernacle** (Exodus 33:7-11)
2. **The Spirit Rests on Leaders** (Numbers 11:24-30)
3. **God Commissions Joshua** (Numbers 27:18-23; Deuteronomy 31:14-15, 23)

Central Truth: Godly leadership can be cultivated by ongoing spiritual practices.

Focus: Identify key moments and emulate practices in Joshua's spiritual development.

Evangelism Emphasis: Godly values and virtues can influence unbelievers to appreciate the Christian way of life.

Golden Text: "The Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he turned again to the camp; but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle" (Exodus 33:11).

Although noted for his humility, Moses was an amazing man and an exemplary leader. He was called by God to lead hundreds of thousands of people out of Egypt and through the wilderness for forty years. But the time of his leadership would come to an end. Who could be sufficient to step into his shoes? It would take someone willing to heed God's call and obey His voice. That man was Joshua.

In this lesson, we will follow the career of the successor to Moses. Joshua became the national and military leader who took the children of Israel into the Promised Land. He finished his life having experienced the Exodus from Egypt, the establishment of the covenant at Sinai, living in the desert for forty years, and, finally, moving into Canaan.

1. JOSHUA REMAINS IN THE TABERNACLE

A. The Tent of Meeting (Exodus 33:7-10)

⁷ And Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it without the camp, afar off from the camp, and called it the Tabernacle of the congregation. And it came to pass, that every one which sought the Lord went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was without the camp. ⁸ And it came to pass, when Moses went out unto the tabernacle, that all the people rose up, and stood every man at his tent door, and looked after Moses, until he was gone into the tabernacle. ⁹ And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the Lord talked with Moses. ¹⁰ And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at the tabernacle door: and all the people rose up and worshipped, every man in his tent door.

God Almighty is majestic and glorious beyond our comprehension. The Scriptures declare He dwells in unapproachable light (1 Tim. 6:16). John wrote that no one has seen God at any time (John 1:18). The Lord told Moses no one could see His face and live (Ex. 33:20). Yet, God wants to be known. In the past, He made Himself known in various ways (Heb. 1:1-3). Consistently, God condescended to meet with His people. This is what the tabernacle (and, later, the Temple) was all about. It was the meeting place where God revealed Himself to the children of Israel.

When Israel left Egypt, they were blessed with the visible presence of God—the cloud of glory. This was a manifest sign that He was with them and watching over them. Yet, God wanted something more personal. So He gave instructions to build a place where they could offer sacrifices and meet with Him (see Ex. 25:8). The Hebrew word for “tabernacle” is *mishkan*, meaning “dwelling place.” It is the place where the glory of God dwelt near His people. His glory is also referred to as the *Shekinah*, a Hebrew term not found in the Bible.

Until the Israelites could build the tabernacle, God allowed for a place where the people could inquire of God and be in His presence. This was “the tent of meeting” (33:7 NIV). The Bible gives us a description of this temporary meeting place in this chapter. This follows immediately after the fiasco of the golden calf. As a consequence of their rebellious idolatry, the Lord had warned the Israelites, “You are a stiff-necked people; if for a single moment I should go up among you, I would consume you” (v. 5 ESV). His very nearness would cause judgment. Yet, God did desire a place to meet. So Moses set up a tent outside the camp (v. 7). Moses may have been visiting such a tent of meeting since leaving Egypt. But now, because of Israel’s sinful idolatry, the tent was removed from the camp. Here Moses would go to commune with the Lord. For Moses, this was a very intimate experience. He talked with God “face to face,” like one friend to another (v. 11; Num. 12:8 NIV).

An interesting pattern developed for these divine interchanges. Moses would go outside the camp and enter the tent of meeting. When the people saw Moses moving toward the tent, they would go to the entrance of their own tents. In a sign of reverence for what was about to take place, they would stand there until Moses entered the tent (Ex. 33:8). This also indicated they could approach no further, for their sin separated them from God. Only Moses and Joshua could enter the tent of meeting. Then the cloud of God's glory would move to the entrance of the meeting place, where "the Lord talked with Moses" (v. 9)—God to man, Friend to friend. This temporary "tabernacle" was a tent for meeting with God, but it was not the permanent place where God would dwell among His people.

Moses' daily routine involved intimate communion with the Lord. But it also afforded an opportunity for Israel to seek after God. One of Moses' responsibilities was to be a judge (Ex. 18:13). Moses had delegated much of this task to other leaders, but there were times the people needed to hear from God. The tent of meeting offered them a chance to reverently approach the Lord's presence so Moses could query God for them.

Still today, God desires to meet with us. But we do not have to go to some physical location. Rather, we have direct access to God through Christ (Eph. 2:18). In fact, *we* are now the tent of meeting (1 Cor. 3:16). We must never take this for granted. The Shekinah, the abiding presence of God, is within us. Through the finished work of Christ, we have constant and immediate access to God's presence.

—According to Exodus 33:10, what motivated the Israelites to worship God? What should motivate us to worship Him?

B. Aide to Moses (Exodus 33:11)

¹¹ And the Lord spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend. And he turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle.

We don't know details about Joshua's early life, but something about this man attracted Moses' attention and caused him to take Joshua under his wing. Before this, he is mentioned regarding Israel's battle with the Amalekites (ch.1 7). This foreshadowed his role in Israel's military conquest of Canaan forty years later. He is also mentioned as Moses's servant (24:13) who accompanied him up Mount Sinai. He did not go all the way to the top; this was for Moses alone (see vv. 1-2). But he went further than anyone else and approached near to God's presence.

Now Joshua accompanied Moses into God's presence again. As Moses' personal servant, he also entered the tent of meeting. He watched Moses speak with the Lord. Then when Moses returned to the camp, Joshua stayed behind. Some think this indicates he remained to take care of the tent or be available for anyone who might visit during Moses' absence, basically fulfilling mere custodial duties. However, the text seems to imply more. Notice he "did not leave the tent" (NIV), meaning he was already inside. He chose to remain behind. Some translations say Joshua "would not leave the inside of the tent" (HCSB). In other words, he did not want to leave. He lingered in the place where God had made His presence vitally manifest. This is a powerful statement as to the character of Joshua. There is something about anyone who chooses to linger in the Lord's presence—to stay where God has been made known.

Worshiper or Wanderer?

People who do not worship are swept into a vast restlessness, epidemic in the world, with no steady direction and no sustaining purpose.—Edmund Clowney

2. THE SPIRIT RESTS ON LEADERS

A. Joshua's Concern (Numbers 11:24-28)

²⁴ And Moses went out, and told the people the words of the Lord, and gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people, and set them round about the tabernacle. ²⁵ And the Lord came down in a cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease. ²⁶ But there remained two of the men in the camp, the name of the one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad: and the spirit rested upon them; and they were of them that were written, but went not out unto the tabernacle: and they prophesied in the camp. ²⁷ And there ran a young man, and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp. ²⁸ And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, one of his young men, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them.

Moses continually faced the same problems in leading the Israelites. One problem was they constantly complained from the time they left Egypt until they approached the Promised Land. We see one example of this in Numbers 11. This tendency to grumble led to another problem for Moses. He often felt overwhelmed by the enormity of the task God assigned to him. The Israelites were a huge mass of people—over 600,000 men of fighting age (v. 21). This means the population of the entire Israelite camp was well over 2 million.

Constantly hearing the complaining of Israel caused Moses himself to complain to God (vv. 11-15). Previously, Moses had learned to delegate some of his duties to other men (see Ex. 18). But now, he felt overwhelmed again by his leadership responsibilities. In response to Moses' concern, the Lord met with the leaders of Israel.

Moses gathered seventy of the key leaders of the nation (Num. 11:24). They congregated around the tabernacle, where the Lord manifested His glory and gave instructions to Moses. The Lord then took of the spirit that was on Moses and caused it to rest upon the elders. There are several important matters to consider here.

First, God operates through ordained leaders. The spirit of Moses came upon those who were already in leadership positions. In an age and a culture where authority is often questioned and

disdained, we need to reclaim the Biblical importance given to leadership authority. All authority is God-ordained (Rom. 13:1). This is hard to accept when certain leaders do not demonstrate godly leadership, but we must respect even those leaders as placed by God. Leaders serve a vital function in the economy of God.

Second, when God “took of the spirit that was upon him” and placed it on the elders, this did not diminish the power or authority of Moses in any way, for it was the Lord’s Spirit resting on Moses (see Num. 11:17; Isa. 63:11-12). There is no limit to the Spirit of God and what He can do.

Third, when the Spirit came upon the elders, “they prophesied” (Num. 11:25). To *prophesy* means “to speak for” God. Apparently, the power of God was so vibrant within them that they ecstatically uttered prophetic proclamations. This was consistent with the anointing that rested upon Moses, for he was himself a prophet (see Deut. 18:18). This reminds us of the spirit of prophecy that came upon Saul (1 Sam. 10:10-12). When the Spirit of God comes upon a person, it is not unusual for supernatural utterances to take place.

When this supernatural empowering occurred, two of the elders were not present. They were in the camp, away from the tent of meeting. Yet, “the spirit rested upon them” (Num. 11:26) as well. A youth ran to inform Moses of this, apparently troubled at this event (v. 27). Joshua spoke up in concern about this. He asked Moses to silence the two elders (v. 28). Joshua may have been afraid this would cause a general laxness as regards the prophetic gift and disrespect for spiritual authority. This shows his attitude about things being done properly and in order. It also demonstrates Joshua’s sense of loyalty to Moses.

—*Today, why must we have Spirit-anointed speech taking place both inside the Christian places of meeting and throughout the “camp,” where people live?*

B. Moses’ Answer (Numbers 11:29-30)

²⁹ And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, and that the Lord would put his spirit upon them! ³⁰ And Moses gat him into the camp, he and the elders of Israel.

Moses understood Joshua's concern. "Moses replied, 'Are you jealous for my sake?'" (v. 29 NIV). He might have had a grin on his face when he said this. He loved and respected this capable young man. Although Joshua may have been jealous for Moses, the prophet was not himself jealous. Indeed, Moses was a man of exemplary character, although he had his weaknesses. In the course of his life, Moses displayed many admirable qualities. He was noted as a humble man (12:3). He exhibited courage in confronting Pharaoh. In his repeated intercession for Israel, Moses showed his compassionate heart. He consistently went to God with his problems and relied on the Lord for help. Although he would not enter the Promised Land, Moses served as a qualified and able mentor to Joshua, who would fulfill the Lord's desire for Israel to take possession of Canaan.

Moses then expressed a wish that all of the Lord's people had His Spirit and would prophesy. Although this desire would not be realized in Moses' day, the time came when this was possible. Joel predicted it (Joel 2:28), and the disciples experienced it on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-19). Now, under the new covenant, all of God's people have access to the fullness of God's anointing and the power of the Holy Spirit (v. 39).

The Anointing

When the anointing is on you, you will see things in the Bible you had not seen before. You will feel God near as you had not felt Him. You will be easier to live with!—R. T. Kendall

3. GOD COMMISSIONS JOSHUA

A. Empowered and Ordained to Lead (Numbers 27:18-23)

¹⁸ And the Lord said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him; ¹⁹ And set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight.

²⁰ And thou shalt put some of thine honour upon him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be

obedient. ²¹ And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the Lord: at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he, and all the children of Israel with him, even all the congregation. ²² And Moses did as the Lord commanded him: and he took Joshua, and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation: ²³ And he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as the Lord commanded by the hand of Moses.

As Israel approached the end of their forty years of wandering, God let Moses know his life was nearing an end. He told Moses to climb Mount Abarim. There the Lord would meet with him and allow him to glimpse the Promised Land that he would not enter (Num. 27:12). There on the mountaintop, God said Moses would die. Moses accepted the Lord's words, but he did ask for one thing. He prayed the Lord would ordain a new leader who would take the Israelites into Canaan (vv. 15-17).

God directed Moses to ordain Joshua as his successor. This is what the Lord and Moses had been planning for Joshua all of his life. Joshua, as the servant of Moses, had been with Moses on Sinai. He had followed in the great prophet's footsteps. In everything Moses had experienced, Joshua had been there, observing and learning. For forty years, he had been preparing, waiting, maturing, and learning. God had a huge job for Joshua to do. Such responsibility required the right man with the right character and the right training.

Someone once asked William Booth, founder of the Salvation Army, what he would do if he knew Christ would return in ten years. Booth responded he would spend nine years preparing for ministry and one year proclaiming the Gospel. He knew effective work for God requires adequate preparation.

The Lord himself called Joshua "a man in whom is the Spirit" (v. 18 NKJV). Joshua not only had the proper training, he was also a spiritual man, endowed with the power of the Holy Spirit.

This reminds us of another truth. All of our training and preparation is useless unless we are energized with the anointing of the Spirit (see John 15:5; Acts 1:4, 8).

By this time, Aaron had died. His son Eleazar was now high priest. God directed that Joshua be brought before Eleazar and the entire nation of Israel. His ordination was to be a public event, thus ensuring everyone witnessed the proper transfer of authority from Moses to Joshua. Moses was to “invest him with some of [his own] authority” (Num. 27:20 ESV). By honoring Joshua in this way, Moses endorsed him as God’s chosen leader to be followed and obeyed, even as Moses had been followed and obeyed (Josh. 1:16-17). Joshua was God’s man.

The ordination ceremony consisted of both Moses (Num. 27:18) and Eleazar (vv. 22-23) laying hands on Joshua. This act signified the transfer of leadership to Joshua. It also represented the endowment with the power of the Spirit. Laying hands on someone was a common feature of the calling and ordination of priests, prophets, and kings. Here, God now identified Joshua as the anointed and Spirit-led leader of the nation.

The final phase of Joshua’s installation consisted of a charge from Eleazar (vv. 19, 23). This was probably a solemn instruction as to how he was to govern the people. It would have certainly included a directive to follow the Law of God as given to Moses. Along with this charge, the Lord said Joshua should be reminded he was not alone in his role as leader. Eleazar would be there with him, helping him to seek God’s will and receive divine direction (v. 21).

—*Why must we pray for the Christian leaders in our churches and communities?*

B. Commanded and Commissioned (Deuteronomy 31:14-15, 23)

¹⁴ And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, thy days approach that thou must die: call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tabernacle of the congregation, that I may give him a charge. And Moses and Joshua went, and presented themselves in the tabernacle of the congregation. ¹⁵ And the Lord appeared in the tabernacle in a pillar of a cloud: and the pillar of the cloud stood over the door of the tabernacle.

²³ And he gave Joshua the son of Nun a charge, and said, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou shalt bring the children of Israel into the land which I swore unto them: and I will be with thee.

Deuteronomy 31 gives a few more details about the ordination of Joshua. Not only was this in public, in front of all of Israel; it occurred at the entrance to the tabernacle. Joshua was not only standing in the presence of the people, but also before the presence of Almighty God. As Moses and the new leader stood there, the cloud of God's glory appeared in the tabernacle and filled the entryway. This was familiar ground for Joshua. It must have reminded him of the times the glory of God manifested at the doorway of the earlier tent of meeting. He probably thought of those times he had lingered in the place of God's presence. As Joshua began his new role as Israel's leader, the same God whom he had sought as a youth was with him in his maturity.

We have read that the high priest commissioned Joshua. Now, the Lord himself spoke to Joshua. Speaking through Moses, the Lord directed Joshua to be strong, courageous, and confident that he would, indeed, take the children of Israel into the Promised Land (v. 23). This was a certainty, for it was the promised word of God himself. The Lord then assured Joshua that God would be with him. In leading Israel to conquer the land, he would have human and divine support.

Joshua must have felt overwhelmed by all this. He was called to lead a vast nation, and to conquer multiple kingdoms and peoples. On top of that, he had the daunting task of filling the shoes of Moses. Who could measure up to such a standard? It is no wonder God said to "be strong and of a good courage." Joshua needed that assurance. Indeed, the Lord would repeat this promise to Joshua three times (Josh. 1:6-7, 9) when the Israelites were poised to cross the Jordan River and enter Canaan. But God was wise in His choice of Joshua. As seen in the Book of Joshua, he was a capable, dynamic, and godly leader.

The Father of His Country

George Washington was the right man in the right position at the right time. Despite overwhelming odds, he persevered and led the revolutionary army to victory. His wisdom guided delegates at the convention which created the U.S. Constitution. As the first president, he set the model for all future administrations. No wonder Washington is called “the Father of his country”! He is a dynamic example of the power and importance of leadership.

WE NEED GODLY LEADERS

“We don’t need another hero,” Tina Turner once sang. I beg to differ. Our society desperately needs legitimate heroes, exemplary leaders. We need people of courage and integrity to guide us in the Lord’s ways. We need Joshuas! E. M. Bounds wrote, “What the church needs today is not more machinery or . . . novel methods, but men whom the Holy Ghost can use—men of prayer, men mighty in prayer. The Holy Ghost does not flow through methods, but through men. He does not come on machinery, but on men. He does not anoint plans, but men” (*Power Through Prayer*).

Joshua’s example should stir our hearts. Could it be that God is calling us to be the next great leaders for His people? If so, will we undertake the needed preparation? Are we willing to linger in the “tent of meeting”? Will we learn from the saints of God, as Joshua was mentored by Moses? Will we bow before the Lord, declaring our submission to His voice? Are we willing to stand for our Lord, and fight His battles? May God give us such heroes!

Daily Devotions

- M. Abram Builds Altars to God (Genesis 12:4-9)
- T. David Returns the Ark (1 Chronicles 16:1-3)
- W. Josiah Leads Covenant Renewal (2 Chronicles 34:29-33)
- T. Andrew Introduces Peter to Jesus (John 1:35-42)
- F. Aquila and Priscilla Disciple Apollos (Acts 18:24-28)

S. Paul Prays for Fellow Believers (Philippians 1:3-11)