

INTRODUCTION

This is the first message in a new series from Joshua I am calling, “Making the Leap from Good to GREAT!” One of the best-selling business books in America is entitled *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap and Others Don’t* by Jim Collins. Collins led a research team studying businesses in America that successfully transformed from mediocrity to excellence. One of the important factors Collins’ team found was that companies that were content to be simply “good” never achieved greatness. In that respect, the good becomes the enemy of great. Another important factor Collins discovered was the quality of leadership is a key factor in achieving excellence.

This series from Joshua is based on the premise that thousands of Christians are content to be merely “good” (they have their ticket to heaven punched) but they seldom enter into the joy of spiritual greatness.

The book of Joshua begins after the children of Israel have spent 40 years wandering in the wilderness. Let’s pick up the story in Joshua 1:1-11:

“After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses’ aide: ‘Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give them—to the Israelites. I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates—all the Hittite country—to the Great Sea on the west. No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.’

‘Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.’

So Joshua ordered the officers to the people: ‘Go through the camp and tell the people, ‘Get your supplies ready. Three days from now you will cross the Jordan here to go in and take possession of the land the Lord your God is giving you for your own.’”

The book of Joshua is one of the most exciting books in all of the Bible. It reads like an action novel. But it is *much more* than an historical record of Israel’s military conquest of Canaan. It is a powerful picture of how every follower of Jesus can experience victory. I’ve only read a few books that I can honestly say changed my life, but one of them would be Dr. Alan Redpath’s book on Joshua, *The Victorious Christian Life*. I read this book in college, and discovered it is possible for a Believer to enter into “Canaan,” which is a description of a “different level” of

Christian living. You may call it the Spirit-filled life, the abundant life, the victorious life, or a life of fullness. It doesn't matter what you call it, but it represents making the leap from good to *great* in Christian living. In order to understand this exciting truth, it's important to study the book of Joshua in its historical context. It's a story of a group of people who moved from Egypt to the Promised Land.

I. THE LESSON OF SPIRITUAL GEOGRAPHY

The entire Exodus experience is a gigantic object lesson that God uses to teach us what salvation really is. The New Testament clearly teaches the events of the Old Testament serve as examples to us. In commenting on the Exodus, the Apostle Paul wrote, "These things happened to them [Exodus story] as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come." (1 Corinthians 10:11) As we follow a map of the progress of the Exodus, we discover it serves as a template of the Christian life.

1. Egypt = Lost and in bondage

When Joseph was the Prime Minister of Egypt, he brought his family to Egypt. The Israelites were fruitful and multiplied, but after 400 years the Pharaoh in charge had forgotten about Joseph. By this time the Israelites had been reduced to slavery at the hands of the Egyptians. At one time, every one of us found ourselves in spiritual Egypt: Lost without Jesus. We were in bondage to sin, and a slave to Satan. God doesn't want anyone to stay in Egypt. The Bible says "He is not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9b)

2. The Exodus = Deliverance (salvation)

God provided a supernatural solution to deliver His people from bondage. He used the blood of an innocent lamb to bring about their liberation. God did the same thing for us. Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. (John 1:29) Moses leading the Israelites *out* of Egypt is a picture of a person leaving the bondage of sin into the salvation God has offered as a free gift. The Red Sea experience was even a picture of Christian baptism. The New Testament says, "Our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea." (1 Corinthians 10:1-2)

3. Wilderness = Spiritual immaturity

After leaving Egypt and crossing the Red Sea, the Children of Israel spent about two years in the wilderness. During this time, God gave them the Ten Commandments on Mt. Sinai, and taught them how to worship Him.

When you first become a Christian, you go through a time of spiritual immaturity. Like a baby, you must be taught and nourished in order to grow. That's a functional time of immaturity. But when spiritual immaturity persists, it becomes a dysfunctional experience of immaturity. Just as God never intended the Israelites to stay in the wilderness, He wants you to grow out of the spiritual wilderness. God wants you to make the leap to the next level of Christian living.

4. Canaan = The victorious Christian life

Unfortunately many Christians have been misinformed about what it means to "cross Jordan." Some people make the mistake of thinking Canaan represents heaven. We sing a few old hymns that reinforce this mistaken idea. Hymns may be inspiring, but they aren't inspired like the Word of God.

For instance, in 1787, a London Sabbatarian minister named Samuel Stennett wrote a hymn entitled "On Jordan's Stormy Banks," whose lyrics say: "On Jordan's Stormy Banks I stand and cast a wishful eye; To Canaan's fair and happy land; where my possessions lie; (nothing wrong so far, but the last stanza makes it clear he thinks Canaan is heaven) "When shall I reach that happy place; and be forever blest? When shall I see my Savior's face, and in His bosom rest? I am bound for the Promised Land! Oh, who will come and go with me, I am bound for the Promised Land."

But Canaan doesn't represent heaven and you don't have to go through a cemetery to get there. Canaan was a place of warfare and victory. There'll be no warfare in heaven. So, Canaan represents the victorious Christian life. It is a place of battle but it is also a place of blessings and grace. Here's one verse describing Canaan: "...a land flowing with milk and honey...with large, flourishing cities you did not build, houses filled with all kinds of good things you did not provide, wells you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves you did not plant—then you will eat and be satisfied." (Deuteronomy 6:3, 10-11)

The wilderness is a place of boredom and restlessness. Canaan is a place of excitement and satisfaction. I see a lot of Christians who are bored out of their minds. On the other hand, I see many who know what it is to make the leap into the front lines of spiritual battle.

5. Kadesh Barnea = Your decision point

Do you know how long it should have taken the Children to move from Sinai to Canaan? Eleven days. Instead it took them forty years: Why? Numbers 13-14 records the story of how the Children of Israel came to Kadesh Barnea, the gateway to Canaan. Moses sent 12 spies into the land to check it out. When they returned, ten of them said that it was a beautiful land, but there were mighty giants living in the land. They said, "Compared to them, we were like grasshoppers." They counseled Moses and the people *not* to move into Canaan.

But there were two spies, named Joshua and Caleb, who said, "Sure there are giants in the land, but our God is bigger! Let's do it!" The children of Israel must have been the forefathers of Baptists because they had a business meeting right there at Kadesh Barnea. Moses said, "Everybody in favor of going into the land, say 'aye.'" There were two votes in the affirmative—Joshua and Caleb. Then Moses said, "All opposed to going into Canaan say 'nay.'" It must have sounded like a volcano as thousands of voices yelled, "NAY!"

At that point, God shook His head in disappointment and said, "Okay, if you aren't going to trust Me, then take another lap around Mt. Sinai...and another, and another." They did that for forty years until every adult (except for Joshua and Caleb) died in the desert. Only after they died, was

God ready for Joshua to lead this new generation into Canaan.

Remember, this even applies to us, too. God has invited us to move into the abundant life by faith. The Israelites came to Kadesh Barnea only once, but I'm convinced God brings individuals and churches to Kadesh Barnea many times. He says, "There's the challenge. Sure there are obstacles. Sure there are giants. But trust me. Obey me. Go for it!"

You can read about this event in the New Testament. The Bible says, "Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the desert?...So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief. Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it." (Hebrews 3:16, 19; 4:1)

So the book of Joshua is not a story of God's people conquering a new territory. It is a challenge for each of us to make the leap from good (wilderness wandering) to great (spiritual victory). You may be thinking, "Okay, how do I do that?" The same way Joshua did:

II. THE KEYS TO SPIRITUAL SUCCESS

In Chapter 1, we discover three key elements leading to Joshua's success in claiming the Promised Land. Each of these three great truths was accompanied by a promise of God. God never breaks His promises. For instance, God made a promise to Noah that He would never again destroy the earth with a flood, and every time you see a beautiful rainbow in the sky it should remind you that God *always* keeps His promises.

If you fast forward about 25 years from Joshua 1, you come to the key verse in Joshua. These are Joshua's words after they had entered the land and conquered all the enemies. He didn't say, "Look what I did," or "Look what WE did." He said, "Look what GOD did!" He said, "You know with all your heart and soul that not one of all the good promises the Lord your God gave you has failed. Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed." (Joshua 23:14) In order to claim God's promise as Joshua did, you must embrace these three key elements:

1. You must have an assurance of God's presence

God knew Joshua would face many enemies so He gave him this promise: "As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you...Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:5, 9)

As you face the personal challenges and battles of your promised land, you can rest assured that God will NEVER leave you or forsake you. God never takes a vacation, and He never sleeps. Even if you aren't aware of His presence, He IS there.

I recently read a true story by Carrie Bryant illustrating the power of God's presence. Carrie's brother got a new job in Southern California and had to relocate so quickly from Michigan that he had to fly out. His grandmother, who was in her 70s, offered to drive his pickup truck from

Michigan to California, and then she would fly back home.

To complicate matters, the day before she left, the grandmother broke her left wrist and had to have a cast put on her arm. Even though she had never driven this far, she insisted on making the trip anyway. After plotting her trip down through Indiana, she started off.

It was a difficult trip. The truck was a stick shift and her cast made it hard to steer while she was shifting gears. She was so nervous that she seldom drove over 60 mph. She cringed with fear every time a huge 18-wheeler passed her.

After several days of driving she pulled into a rest stop in West Texas to take a nap. After her nap, she stopped at a truck stop to get some coffee. As she was leaving the coffee shop a strange man walked up to her and said, "Ma'am, are you driving a white GMC pickup with Michigan plates?" She was apprehensive about answering him, but he assured her he meant her no harm. So she reluctantly answered his questions. The man said, "Just a minute." He stepped aside and called somebody on his cell phone.

When he finished his call he explained a trucker had reported a seeing an elderly lady with a cast on her arm having a difficult time. The truckers nicknamed her "Granny" and they started watching her in case she needed assistance. One trucker would report what motel she stopped at and in the morning, another trucker would pick her up and report on Granny's location. He further explained, "We lost you when you pulled off into the rest stop, and we were about to call the state troopers. When I saw your truck, I stopped to see if you were okay. I just called a friend to report that Granny was safe and sound."

The lady had no idea that while she had been driving all those miles that someone cared enough to be watching over her. The rest of the trip was much easier. She wasn't afraid when an 18-wheeler passed her, instead she smiled and waved. What a difference it made for her to know that she wasn't alone.

Aren't you glad to know there is Someone watching over you as well? As nice as many truckers are, God will *never* lose sight of you. He's got your front door and your back door, good buddy.

2. You must have courage for God's challenge

Joshua had many battles to face, so God encouraged him with this promise: "Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. Be strong and very courageous... Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous." (Joshua 1:6-7, 9)

Courage is hard to define. Some synonyms are: guts, grit, backbone, fearlessness, bravery, valor, and confidence. Courage is like humility, if you claim to have it, you probably don't. It's like the guy who bragged that he had cut the tail off a man-eating lion with nothing but a pocketknife. When asked why he didn't cut the lion's head off if he was so brave, the man admitted, "Somebody had already done that."

Courage is not realized until the moment that you need it; and in that moment you discover you either have it or you don't.

A little boy picking up five smooth stones and walking toward a giant with nothing but a slingshot in his hand—that's courage! Moses standing in front of Pharaoh and saying, "Let my people go!"—that's courage! Elijah standing on a mountain calling down fire from heaven against 450 false prophets—that's courage! Men storming the beaches at Normandy—that's courage! A teenager refusing to surrender his or her virginity before marriage—that's courage! The Christian life is not a playground, it's a battleground—it requires courage.

A British missionary society wrote to David Livingstone when he was in Africa. They asked him, "Have you found a good road to where you are? If so, we will send other men to join you." Livingstone wrote back, "If you have men who will come only if they know there is a good road, I don't want them. I want men who will come if there is no road at all." That's courage.

There are challenges ahead for you that you don't even know about. You need God's courage. Our church faces a new challenge this year. In a few months, we'll be bringing plans to you to add more space to our campus: space for children, a fellowship hall, educational space—and lots of new parking. It's not going to be cheap, and it's not going to be easy. It's going to be a challenge. It's not for the fainthearted.

3. You must have obedience to God's Word

The third key truth to embrace is found in God's promise in Joshua 1:7-8. God said, "Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful." (Joshua 1:7-8) God warned Joshua that the *only* way to be successful was to pay attention to God's laws and commands.

a. Speak it

God tells us to honor His Word in three ways. First, we are to *speak* it—it should not depart from our mouths. To be successful, you must read, memorize, and speak God's word.

b. Meditate on it

Second, we must *meditate* on God's Word. That means you keep it in your mind, and mull it over and over again. It's like cow eating grass; she can bring it up and "chew on the cud." Psalm 1 says a successful prosperous man is one who meditates on God's Word day and night. Do you think about God's Word when you're not in church, or reading it? Although, it's not in the Bible, it IS true that an idle mind is the devil's workshop. If you don't ponder on the things of God, I promise you that Satan will suggest something else for you to think about.

c. Obey

Third, we must *obey* the God's Word. God's command to Joshua was simple: Go in and claim the land! If you want to take a quantum leap from good to *great*, decide that you are going to *choose* to obey God's Word in every area of your life. If you choose to obey God, He will give you the power to obey. I'll never forget hearing the great preacher S.M. Lockridge talking about this. He said, "If God tells me to jump through a brick wall, my job is to jump AT it, His job is getting me THROUGH it." Amen!

CONCLUSION

So, where are you on the map of salvation? Are you in Egypt? Then you need Jesus to bring you out of spiritual bondage. Are you a new Christian in the wilderness? You need to learn God's Word and keep on growing? Are you someone who has been a Believer for many years, but you're still wandering the wilderness? You need to make the leap of faith into the Promised Land.

How can you tell if you living in Canaan? You may think because you're having problems that you aren't there. But Canaan is a place of constant battles—but also a place of victory. When you cross over into the promised land of fullness, the enemy throws his worst at you. It is a place of constant battle, but it is also a place where you can have victory in Jesus!

The life of victory in Jesus is your spiritual heritage. All you have to do is to follow Jesus over into the promised land of victory. I leave you with this question: Have you claimed your inheritance? Actually, the book of Joshua is a companion book with the New Testament book of Ephesians. For instance, when you compare Joshua 1:3 and Ephesians 1:3, you see they are talking about the same thing: our spiritual inheritance. The word "inheritance" appears 55 times in Joshua. In Joshua 1:3, God said, "I will give you EVERY PLACE where you set your foot... you will lead these people to INHERIT the land I swore to their forefathers to give to them." (Josh. 1:3, 6) Compare that to Ephesians 1:3 which says, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with EVERY SPIRITUAL BLESSING in Christ...that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his GLORIOUS INHERITANCE in the saints." (Ephesians 1:3, 18)

J. Vernon McGee writes about a certain Englishman who moved to America years ago. Soon after he arrived he dropped out of sight and his family in England lost contact with him. Not long after he arrived, his uncle in England died and left him about \$5 million. Scotland Yard set out trying to find the heir. They searched for him but never found him. Later the man was found frozen to death in a doorway of a cheap hotel in Chicago. He couldn't afford the few bucks for a room, although he was the heir of millions. He never laid hold of what was his. Many Christians today are living the same way. They are struggling in spiritual poverty and die like bums in a doorway, never claiming the blessings to which are available to them.

I challenge, you: go on with God! Take possession of your promised land!

OUTLINE

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2. The Exodus = Deliverance (salvation)
3. Wilderness = Spiritual immaturity
4. Canaan = The victorious Christian life
5. Kadesh Barnea = Your decision point

II. THE KEYS TO SPIRITUAL SUCCESS

1. Assurance of God's presence (Joshua 1:5, 9)
2. Courage for God's challenge (Joshua 1:6-7, 9)
3. Obedience to God's Word (Joshua 1:7-8)
 - a. Speak it
 - b. Meditate on it
 - c. Obey



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For the Joy...
Pastor David Dykes