
Joshua

Growing Up

Various Passages

*Life is like a roller coaster. You go up, you go down.
You go right, you go left. You pray to God you don't fall out.
~ Arlene, Murder at the Howard Johnson's*

I*t isn't always easy to figure out what God is doing in life. I've always suggested this life is boot camp for the next. But sometimes our past is also boot camp for the present.*

I won't give you the history of my entire life, after all that's only interesting to me plus when I write the book you can buy a copy. But, in a nut shell, how appropriate, I started as a leasing agent in the real estate business. Then I moved on to accounting, first public. But then the IRS went after my boss who fled to Mexico with his family to do drugs.

Well enough was enough, and so in conjunction with my having to work at a non-profit to comply with conscientious objector status, I went to work for the hospital. Eventually, as an account, I worked as an ombudsman and soon people came to me, not only with hospital administrative types of problems, but with their personal struggles as well.

Along the way I held a number of lay positions in churches and started teaching adult Sunday back in 1970. What do you know 50 years. Shish!

The point of all of this is that from real estate to account, public to private, to hospital administration and everything else that went along all led somewhere. But did I know where it was leading? No! And has it all reached the end, that is am I doing what I will always do? I have know idea.

And that is the point. We don't always understand the now in relationship to the future. We don't see how what God is doing now relates to what God will be doing then. But we don't need to. We don't need to see the big picture. We need instead to simply look at where God tells us to put our foot down next. And who knows, other than in eternity, where our future foot steps will lead? Well God does!

This of course is the same question Joshua may have asked. "What is going on in my life and where am I headed?" Well it is this process we are going to review this morning, seeing where he came from that prepared him for where we find him at the beginning of his book.

II The Book

B. Joshua's History

1. The Exodus
2. Wilderness Experiences
 - a. Amalek
 - b. Mt. Sinai
 - c. Spying
 - d. Successor

Introduction: We've looked at Israel in the wilderness. We've had an introduction to the book itself. And now I think we should take a quick at Joshua's back story, that is what he'd already experienced before we join him in the book.

The reality of serving the Lord is one of time and process. This doesn't mean we aren't all called to serve the Lord at whatever point we are in our walk. What it does mean is the Christian life is one of growth, process, over time. Hopefully as we grow as believers and in dependency on the Lord, we will be more useable by Him.

“... who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began” (2 Timothy 1:9 ESV).

Joshua worked into his job leading Israel. What is interesting is probably no one, other than God, recognized what Joshua's boot camp was doing for him.

This is the Christian life, observing the walks of saints, waiting on the Lord and enduring the boot camp He puts us through so we can grow in our strengths used to serve Him. Consider the walk of Timothy.

“You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. Share in suffering as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him” (2 Timothy 2:1–4 ESV).

Because of this truth, I want to spend some time reviewing the history of Joshua from the sections we have already examined. This lesson is adapted from Gene Getz' Men of Character series, the Joshua volume.¹ As a response to this we then should ask ourselves are we growing in our willingness to let the Lord go before us as we enter the land of service, fighting the giants He has allowed to be in our path?

B. Joshua's History: 1. The Exodus: Like those who went before him, Joshua was born in Egypt and therefore was part of the exodus. We do not know exactly how old he would have been but surly a child at the beginning of this period. Being born in Egypt he would have been a “working” slave. His experience, unlike Moses,' would have been typical of the Hebrews of this period.

“Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. And he said to his people, “Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and, if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land.” Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens. They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses” (Exodus 1:8–11 ESV).

¹ Getz, Gene A, Joshua, Living as a consistent Role Model, Broadman & Holman Publishers, Nashville, TN, 1995, adapted from p. 10-15.

Then came the Exodus. It would be interesting to know the reaction of the average Hebrew or even Joshua's to the events but Scripture does not give us this. Instead we find accounts of the continuous gripping of the people as they leave Egypt and finally arrive at the borders of Canaan. And it is here Joshua first appears on the scene.

2. Wilderness Experiences: a. Amalek: Joshua's first recorded experience must have served him well at later dates because he was selected to lead a counter attack against Amalek's army.

“Then Amalek came and fought with Israel at Rephidim. So Moses said to Joshua, “Choose for us men, and go out and fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand.” So Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought with Amalek, while Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands grew weary, so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it, while Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side. So his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the sword.

*Then the Lord said to Moses, “Write this as a memorial in a book and recite it in the ears of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.” And Moses built an altar and called the name of it, **The LORD Is My Banner**, saying, “A hand upon the throne of the LORD! The LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.”” (Exodus 17:8–16 ESV)*

What do you think was Joshua's most important lesson learned here? It is the same one we have to remember. One can't lose if God is on their side. And it isn't just that He is on their side but they, Joshua, had to depend on Him. *How have you seen this worked out in your own experiences?*

“Jesus looked at them and said, “With man it is impossible, but not with God. For all things are possible with God.”” (Mark 10:27 ESV).

And so Joshua was being prepared without knowing it. Wiersbe notes:

“According to Exodus 17:14, the writer suggests that God had chosen Joshua for a special work in the future. Unknown to Joshua, the battle with Amalek was a testing time when God was examining his faith and courage. “Make every occasion a great occasion, for you can never tell when someone may be taking your measure for a larger place” (Marsden). Joshua's conflict with Amalek was the preparation for many battles he would fight in the Promised Land.”²

b. Mt. Sinai: The next time we see Joshua is at Mt. Sinai. Joshua accompanied Moses as he went up the mountain to receive the 10 Commandments from God. Since Joshua alone was allowed this opportunity, it is safe to assume this was a way of identifying him to Moses and the nation as the one who would one day lead the people in Moses' place.

² Wiersbe, Warren W., Be Strong, Chariot Victor Publishing, Colorado Springs, CO, 1993, p. 11.

“The LORD said to Moses, “Come up to me on the mountain and wait there, that I may give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction.” So Moses rose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God. Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses turned again into the camp, his assistant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent” (Exodus 24:12–13; 33:11 ESV).

What is interesting about this is Joshua is being identified as the right-hand man of Moses significantly before the time of the spies and his appointment to lead the nation. This is also prior to the failure of the nation, the wilderness journey and Moses failure as a leader. God is acting and preparing for a future the people were not even aware of. *Looking back, can you identify times when the Lord was doing a work you didn't recognize at the time?*

c. Spying: The next major event recorded in Joshua's life is of course his espionage mission. You can find the account of this in Numbers 13:1-14:10. Because of the length of the passage I won't read it this morning. You remember though that Joshua along with Caleb were two of twelve who were not afraid to enter Canaan. The reason for the lack of fear was trust in the Lord. It was the obedience of these two men which allowed them to survive the wilderness march and be allowed to enter into the land.

As a consequence of Joshua's faithful report the people were displeased with him and even wanted to kill him. What a taste of leadership.

“And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes and said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, “The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceedingly good land. If the LORD delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey. Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the LORD is with us; do not fear them.” Then all the congregation said to stone them with stones. But the glory of the LORD appeared at the tent of meeting to all the people of Israel” (Numbers 14:6–10 ESV).

Nevertheless, Joshua trusted the Lord and was obedient to his call. And Joshua's trust was recognized by Moses before the people.

“... from the tribe of Ephraim, Hoshea the son of Nun; These were the names of the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun Joshua” (Numbers 13:8, 16 ESV).

Let me quote Getz speaking of Moses' renaming Hoshea Joshua:

“Hoshea means “salvation.” From a human point of view, “Hoshea” would be Israel's savior. But Joshua means “the Lord is salvation.” From a divine point of view, God would lead Israel into Canaan. Through the Lord would definitely use what this young man had learned at Moses' side—in Egypt, in the war against Amalek, on Mount Sinai, his experience as a spy and his subsequent and frightening encounter with Israel when they tried to kill him—yet it was God who would indeed lead

*Israel into Canaan. It was He who would roll back the waters of Jordan, who would cause the walls of Jericho to fall down, and enable Israel to defeat the people of Ai. It was God who would fell the giants in Canaan. Consequently, Moses changed Hoshea's name to Joshua to emphasize and illustrate that God alone was Israel's salvation.”*³

d. Successor: Having experienced all he has finally Joshua is presented to the nation as the successor to Moses. He isn't a replacement, because no one could replace Moses. But he is the successor. And thus we find Joshua at the border of the Land called by God to be responsible to bring the Hebrews into Canaan. Let me again read the passage we saw last time.

“The LORD said to Moses, “Go up into this mountain of Abarim and see the land that I have given to the people of Israel. When you have seen it, you also shall be gathered to your people, as your brother Aaron was, because you rebelled against my word in the wilderness of Zin when the congregation quarreled, failing to uphold me as holy at the waters before their eyes.” (These are the waters of Meribah of Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin.) Moses spoke to the LORD, saying, “Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the congregation who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, that the congregation of the LORD may not be as sheep that have no shepherd.” So the LORD said to Moses, “Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him. Make him stand before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation, and you shall commission him in their sight. You shall invest him with some of your authority, that all the congregation of the people of Israel may obey. And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before the LORD. At his word they shall go out, and at his word they shall come in, both he and all the people of Israel with him, the whole congregation.” And Moses did as the LORD commanded him. He took Joshua and made him stand before Eleazar the priest and the whole congregation, and he laid his hands on him and commissioned him as the Lord directed through Moses” (Numbers 27:12–23 ESV).

““And I pleaded with the Lord at that time, saying, ‘O LORD God, you have only begun to show your servant your greatness and your mighty hand. For what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do such works and mighty acts as yours? Please let me go over and see the good land beyond the Jordan, that good hill country and Lebanon.’ But the LORD was angry with me because of you and would not listen to me. And the LORD said to me, ‘Enough from you; do not speak to me of this matter again. Go up to the top of Pisgah and lift up your eyes westward and northward and southward and eastward, and look at it with your eyes, for you shall not go over this Jordan. But charge Joshua, and encourage and strengthen him, for he shall go over at the head of this people, and he shall put them in possession of the land that you shall see.’ So we remained in the valley opposite Beth-peor” (Deuteronomy 3:23–29 ESV)

Conclusion: As we have seen there are a number of lessons which we can take from the early life of Joshua.

³ Ibid.

1. We can't lose with God on our side.
2. God is acting and preparing for a future people are not even aware of.
3. There is risk and reward to obedience.
4. Opportunities to serve come as God directs.

The result of what we have seen is we are not required to understand all God is doing in our life. Instead, we are to put our feet on the path He shows for us. We know the final destination, heaven, but we don't know the stops, struggles and successes along the way. But the adventure is letting the Lord lead us along the way. And one day, like Joshua we will be able to look back and see all that the Lord has done in our lives and all the opportunities He has give us. We will finally move out from where we can only see the back side of the needle point of our lives and move around to the front where we can see the beautiful work the Lord has done.

The question we must ask ourselves now is: Are we willing to stop living for the mundane issues of this world and instead be willing to live for the kingdom, the great adventure? And we can do this if we always remember:

“Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:11–13 ESV).

True Activity Never Fails.

No true word since the world began was ever wasted; no true life since the world began has ever failed. Oh, understand those two perverted words, 'failure' and 'success,' and measure them by the eternal, not the earthly, standard. When after thirty obscure, toilsome, unrecorded years in the shop of the village carpenter, one came forth to be pre-eminently the man of sorrows, to wander from city to city in homeless labors, and to expire in lonely agony upon the shameful cross — was that a failure? Nay, nay brethren, it was the death of Him who lived that we might follow His footsteps; it was the life, it was the death, of the Son of God.

~ F. W. FARRAR. ⁴

⁴ McClure, editor, J. B., Pearls from Many Seas, The Master Christian Library, AGES Software, Albany, OR, Version 7.0 © 1998.

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Introduction:

(2 Timothy 1:9, 2:1–4)

B. Joshua's History: 1. The Exodus:

(Exodus 1:8–11)

2. Wilderness Experiences: a. Amalek:

(Exodus 17:8–16; Mark 10:27)

b. Mt. Sinai:

(Exodus 24:12–13; 33:11)

c. Spying:

(Numbers 14:6–10, 13:8, 16)

d. Successor:

(Numbers 27:12–23; Deuteronomy 3:23–29)

Conclusion:

(Philippians 4:11–13)

Personal Application: How does knowing that you can't always know/understand God's working in your life effect how you live it?

Prayer for the Week: Lord help me to be able to grow in my trust of You without needing to always have answers to "Why?". In Christ's name, amen.