

## Connection to Passage

Joshua took on the leadership role for God's people as it was time for them to move forward. He supplies a model for moving forward down God's path for our own lives.

## Introduction/Opening

The question behind the movie *Forrest Gump* was whether everyone has a destiny predetermined for them (like Lieutenant Dan believed) or if, as Forrest's mother said, life is like a box of chocolates and you never know what you might get.

The Bible affirms the dynamic of both. God has a positive plan for our lives. Jeremiah 29:11 says, "For I know the plans I have for you"—this is the LORD's declaration—"plans for your welfare, not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope" (HCSB).

The Bible also says we have a choice that influences our welfare. It is not involuntary. The Book of Deuteronomy closes with God's people at the end of 40 years of wandering in the wilderness. Their promised land, their destiny, is ahead of them. Yet the Lord says they have a choice:

"I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, love the LORD your God, obey Him, and remain faithful to Him. For He is your life, and He will prolong your life in the land the LORD swore to give to your fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." (Deut. 30:19-20, HCSB)

While God alone directs the ways of history and our individual lives, there remain some wise decisions to help us move forward down His path.

## Outline

- I. Acknowledge Where You Are (Josh. 1:2b)
  - a. Joshua and the Hebrew people were not in a bad place on the eastern bank of the Jordan River. They were in a relatively safe place. But they were not yet where God wanted them to be as a people. There was more to do ahead of them.
  - b. God's plan is for our lives and for our congregations to move forward. But none are at a place where that is even a possibility without the Lord's help and care. Great ships are launched from harbors, but they are not designed to stay in harbors; rather, they are designed to sail the oceans. The past is our launching pad, not our anchor.

## II. Be Devoted to God's Word (Josh. 1:7b-8)

- a. Wherever God leads, we must be faithful to follow His teachings. The will of the Lord may offer us many options. We can ponder the merits of any number of strategies. But one absolute is that His will is always in line with His Word.

## III. Step Out in Faith (Josh. 1:5-9)

- a. Notice that Joshua was repeatedly posed a challenge to "be strong and courageous." We do not need courage for what we know we can handle. We need courage for something we know we cannot do alone and must have faith in God to complete.
- b. Here are two keys to stepping out in faith:
  - i. Remember that God is with you (1:5b,9).
    1. Joshua knew what was before them. Forty years before, he was one of 12 spies Moses sent to check out that territory. He knew there were seven nations occupying that land. Every single one of them was larger than Israel. Every single one of them was stronger.
    2. The task was bigger than they were, but it was not a task too big for God.
  - ii. Remember that God keeps His promises (1:6).
    1. God echoed a promise He made to Israel's ancestors. He has and continues to be true to His promises.

## Conclusion

While few people are "name it and claim it" Christians, there is a verse worth claiming for yourself individually and as a congregation. It is found a couple of chapters later when Joshua's commission is complete and it is time to move forward. Joshua says to the people, "Consecrate yourselves, because the LORD will do wonders among you tomorrow" (Josh. 3:5, HCSB).

While we do not know what tomorrow holds, may God's people make the decisions we can make in order to be ready for the amazing things He plans to do among us in the season ahead.

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