

Joshua – The development of a Conqueror

A successful leader is not developed over night and without disciplines. Joshua was one of the slaves that came out of Egypt, untried and untrained for war, and accepted the hardship of moving from place to place in a hostile and uninviting wilderness.

He is never identified with the discontented, the faithless anti-Moses crowd, nor a participate in any of the grumbling and pity parties that continuously occurred throughout the large encampment. He had questions but never lost his cool in a crisis and demonstrated an unusual loyalty to Moses.

He always keeps his head above the stuff of life and did not waver in his faith, but kept on believing the promise of God as given through his leader, Moses. When Moses and Aaron were negotiating the terms of leaving Egypt with the Pharaoh, and Pharaoh resisted by increasing the nation's work load, the foremen met with Moses and accused him of being the problem and not the deliverer. Joshua was not in that number of accusers.

He did not participate in accusing the leadership of unwise judgments, or regret that he had left Egypt; nor did he become bitter because of the hardships or complain of being hungry or dissatisfied with God's provision of manna. He did not shake his fist at Moses because there was not any water to drink.

He stayed clear of that discontented segment of Israel who would not believe in God nor endure the hardships of travel in the harshness of the desert without complaint.

After Israel had drunk from the waters of Horeb and been refreshed by God's miraculous provision, the Amalekites saw an opportunity to take some of the spoil of Egypt by attacking the rear of the marching column. They preyed on the weak that could not defend themselves. (Ex. 17).

"Remember what Amalek did to you along the way when you came out from Egypt, how he met you along the way and attacked among you all the stragglers at your rear when you were faint and weary; and he did not fear God. Therefore it shall come about when the LORD your God has given you rest from all your surrounding enemies, in the land which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance to possess, you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven; you must not forget" (Deut. 25:17-19).

According to Matthew Henry's Commentary, the Amalekites were the posterity of Esau. The hate of Esau against Jacob was passed on from generation to generation, and continues to this day.

Joshua was selected to lead the battle against Amalek. Ex. 17

This is the first mention of Joshua in scripture. He was chosen to command the troops. Little did he know, he was being trained to be commander-in-chief of the army of Israel that would invade Canaan? "And Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought against Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill" (Exod 17:10).

Please remember those who engaged in battle against the invading Amalekites were only a few days removed from being slave brick makers. They were not warriors by training, nor did they know how to use their Egyptian weapons.

Just because you have weapons of war does not mean you are a trained soldier. To become an effective soldier it requires training in the skills and arts of warfare and be disciplined to obey commands without question and hesitation. Paul instructed Timothy to be a “good soldier” (2 Tim. 2:3), otherwise, lay aside your will and mission in life and take on the mission of the commander.

Joshua knew his ill prepared warriors needed a miracle. Regardless of the circumstances, he obeyed Moses, selected men and went out to battle. Sometimes workers must do things they have not been qualified for through special training. Have you heard the expression, “training on the job?”

Say for instance you need a large quantity of material to be removed and a Caterpillars Bull Dozer is provided. There are two approaches to getting the job done. You can take a student and send him to diesel mechanics school for two years to learn all about the theories of diesel combustion engines or you can take a student and place him at the controls of the Caterpillar and instruct him on each lever. “Push this lever forward and the dozer blade will go downward, or pull this level back and the engine rpms will increase, etc. In a short time the student is moving material, even though he does not know how or what makes the machine works.

There is a great need in the body of Christ for “short term training” in order that a large body of workers can get involved with the great commission of Jesus Christ. This does not annul the learning process or education along the way, but it does increase the number of workers on the field.

During the early years of the twentieth century, since there were not many bible schools, scores of called preachers simply entered the ministry without any training. I recognize that many mistakes were made, but in spite of the mistakes, the Pentecostal Movement in a few short years impacted the world and changed forever the way that Church work is done.

Joshua had one eye on the battle and the other eye on the hill where Moses, Aaron and Hur had stationed themselves. Joshua recognized the success of the battle depended on the outstretched rod of Moses on the hill. “So it came about when Moses held his hand up, that Israel prevailed, and when he let his hand down, Amalek prevailed” (Exod 17:11). Joshua, a commander in training, knew the importance of keeping his eye on his leadership. Aaron and Hur sat Moses down on a rock and they supported his hands until the setting of the sun. Even seasoned leadership will become tired and need assistance from others.

“So Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword” (Exod 17:13). There are seven lessons in life that developed Joshua into a great leader and warrior.

The first lesson that Joshua learned was that battles were won, not on the basis of superior warriors and equipment, rather on the anointing and favor of God.

Victories in warfare are not always dependent on physical conditioning, education, astute training and skillfully devised plans, but sometimes it is because of the intervention of God.

In this case, the battle was won because of the unity of those involved and their obedience; the willingness of Joshua to accept the challenge of doing battle with Amalek; the willingness of the chosen men to go into battle against a superior force; the willingness of Moses to stretch out the rod of the Lord; and the willingness of Aaron and Hur to support Moses.

Joshua fought, Moses prayed, and Aaron and Hur supported.

This method of fighting was not logical, and later when Joshua led the army of Israel against the nations of Canaan, he willingly laid aside his logic in favor of obeying God's instructions.

No doubt it was a great encouragement to the people to see Joshua before them in the field of battle and Moses above them upon the top of the hill: Christ is our Joshua, the captain of our salvation who fights our battles, and also our Moses, who in the heavens, ever lives making intercession that our faith does not fail.

“And Moses built an altar, and named it The LORD is My Banner” (Exod. 17:15). Jehovah-nissi—The Lord is My Banner!

The second lesson was the waiting game.

Joshua went up to the mountain of Horeb with Moses. “So Moses arose with Joshua his servant, and Moses went up to the mountain of God. But to the elders he said, "Wait here for us until we return to you. And behold, Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a legal matter, let him approach them. Then Moses went up to the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. And the glory of the LORD rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; and on the seventh day He called to Moses from the midst of the cloud. And to the eyes of the sons of Israel the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a consuming fire on the mountain top. And Moses entered the midst of the cloud as he went up to the mountain; and Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights” (Exod 24:13-18).

After spending seven days at the foot of the mountain with Moses, Joshua heard the voice of God calling Moses up to the top of the mountain that was engulfed with the glory cloud. Moses left his responsibilities behind with Aaron and Hur when he entered the cloud. There could not be any distractions. His attention must be on what God was saying to him.

The wait began for Joshua. What accommodations did he have? What food was available to him? Manna? What assurance did Joshua have that Moses would return? What thoughts did Joshua have during the long wait?

Many times faith-building is in the WAIT! We must cast down our vain imaginations. 2 Cor. 10:5.

“{we are} destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and {we are} taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5).

Reasoning, calculations, surmising, fears, doubts and questioning must not control our behavior. Every thought that is against God's purpose and plan must be placed into the prison cell of our mind. Take the key of God's word of promise and lock up those thoughts and sentence them to die. For them to run freely around in our thought processes and cause havoc with our faith is disastrous. A 34 day wait at the edge of the glowing cloud can be stressful, but as an obedient servant Joshua patiently waited. King Saul could not wait seven days. (1 Sam. 13:8). The apostles could not wait but one hour. 380 could not wait seven days in Jerusalem. Can we wait for the promise of Jesus' second coming? Peter prophesied that mockers would be present in the last days raising questions about the validity of God's word. 2 Peter

Lesson three was learning how to discern the sounds of the people.

Now when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people assembled about Aaron, and said to him, "Come, make us a god who will go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him" (Exod. 32:1). The people were not willing to wait, but took action according to their feelings and fears and on the 39th day pressured Aaron to make a god for them.

Weariness in waiting betrays us to a great many temptations. "Give me your ear-rings!" Imagine giving up your ear-rings to make gods of gold. People will give gold off their ears to make an idol, but little to the cause of the Lord. The "gold ear-ring offering" too frequently resemble what I see and hear on Christian television, radio and the internet.

Aaron fashioned a golden calf and built an altar for it in the name of Jehovah and declared a feast day. How often do we associate the Lord with our sin! The people had recently experienced the glory cloud coming down on the mountain, the earthquake, the thunder, the smoke and fire and heard the sounding of the heavenly trumpet. They had just entered into covenant with God and had declare their obedience to Him, but 39 days later they demanded a god to be built to lead them back to Egypt. How quickly people vacillate from one thing to another. That is the story of politics, but it should not be the story of our Christian faith. Abraham did not waver in his faith because of changing circumstances, neither should we?

When Moses emerged from the cloud, Joshua was there, who had patiently waited those 34 days. As they began their descent from the mountain, sounds were heard from below. Joshua discerned the noise to be sounds of war; however a more experienced leader, Moses, discerned the noise to be sounds of celebration. How could Joshua be confused about the sounds? Sometimes what you think you are hearing is not what you are hearing. Divine discernment of what is going on in the camp is critical to the success of the mission.

One of the "obscure gifts of the Holy Spirit", the gift of discernment of spirits, is absolutely necessary in leadership and should be evident in our Christian walk.

Our most dangerous enemy as a nation is fighting a war with non-uniformed soldiers. People who conceal bombs under their clothing, and who ignite bombs on airplanes are those who disguise themselves as harmless civilians.

Our enemy, Satan, is a master at deception and disguise. "For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ? And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their deeds" (2 Cor. 11:13-15).

The Holy Spirit can discern gifts, spirits, actions, intents, and the spirit of the times we live in and the hearts of men. Even as Peter discerned the heart of Ananias and Sapphira to protect the inexperienced church of Jerusalem from spiritual deception, we must discern the deceivers of our day.

Discernment is more than just a skill. Discernment is a gift from God before it is anything else. Yet there are clearly skills that are put to use in doing it, and you can become better at it through training and experience. There is a Spirit at work nudging us, leading us, even pulling us by the nose ring. "But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil" (Heb. 5:14).

We have to discriminate between what is true and what is false, between what is primary and what is secondary, between what is central and what is peripheral; what is good and what is evil. For the most part this is not done by the physical senses, but through the gifts of the Holy Spirit. It makes me shudder to think of the times I simply missed the deception and motives of people, but thank God for a wife who has come to my rescue, and opened my eyes to the trap being laid for me. Thank God for the gift of discernment and the gift of a wife. We must be people who discern the times that we live in and not just discern the weather.

We must become the sons of Issachar: “And of the sons of Issachar, men who understood the times, with knowledge of what Israel should do, their chiefs were two hundred; and all their kinsmen were at their command” (1 Chr. 12:32).

Lesson four is living at the door of the tent of Moses

Joshua was determined to live near the anointing of God. Not only was he serving Moses, but he was learning about the anointing of God. Joshua was not allowed to go into the glory cloud, nor was he allowed entering into the dwelling of Moses, yet he faithfully served him as near to the presence of God as possible.

It is important to associate with people of integrity, honor, and strength, wise and successful. “Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership has righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, “I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (2 Cor. 6:14-16).

Lesson five is learning how to except people who are anointed other than the leader you serve.

So a young man ran and told Moses and said, “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp. “Then Joshua the son of Nun, the attendant of Moses from his youth, answered and said, “Moses, my lord, restrain them. But Moses said to him, “Are you jealous for my sake? Would that all the LORD’S people were prophets, that the LORD would put His Spirit upon them” (Num. 11:27-29)!

Jealous! Why are you getting red in the face? Why are you envious? Possibly Joshua suspected insurrection and felt like he should warn Moses. Moses reprimanded Joshua. Rebuke should not turn a person against his leader. Joshua had to learn that the manifestation of the gifts in others did not threaten the leadership and calling of Moses.

Are you sure in your calling? Did God call you? You should not be threatened by others.

Excellent leaders select people to serve in their organization who can do certain things or say certain things better than they can. Unsure or less confident leaders will always choose people that have lesser gifts and talents than they possess. This is a grave mistake and that particular church or organization will suffer.

Lesson six is learning how to stand your ground when you are in the minority.

“These are the names of the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land; but Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun, Joshua” (Num. 13:16). There comes a special time when God suddenly gives a clearer definition of your purpose. Hoshea (Oshea) signifies a prayer for salvation. One that helps, Joshua signifies a promise of salvation. Jehovah shall save.

The bottom line is the contraction of Jehovah, Jah, was pre-fixed in front of the name Hoshea.

“Jah”oshea” or Joshua. Joshua encountered every army in Canaan with confidence, believing in the name that Moses had given him, that is, he was the living testimony of the promise of salvation. In the revelation of his name, faith to overcome the obstacles rose up in his heart.

Remember, that faith comes by hearing the word of Christ. “So faith {comes} from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ” (Rom 10:17). Joshua chose to resist the evil report of unbelief and contend for the promise of God.

“Surely you shall not come into the land in which I swore to settle you, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun” (Num. 14:30). For the next 38 years Caleb and Joshua survived the plagues and the wilderness because they chose to believe the promise of God.

Lesson seven is accepting the awesome responsibility of your calling.

“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; and have him stand before Eleazar the priest and before the entire congregation; and commission him in their sight. And you shall put some of your authority on him, in order that all the congregation of the sons of Israel may obey {him.} Moreover, he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall inquire for him by the judgment of the Urim before the LORD. At his command they shall go out and at his command they shall come in, {both} he and the sons of Israel with him, even all the congregation. And Moses did just as the LORD commanded him; and he took Joshua and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before the entire congregation. Then he laid his hands on him and commissioned him, just as the LORD had spoken through Moses” (Num. 27:18-23).

Moses announced, “Joshua, I stop here—you are going to cross over.” Deut. 31:3. “Joshua, the Lord will not fail you.” Deut. 31:7.

The first lesson that Joshua learned that battles were won, not on the basis of superior warriors and equipment, rather on the anointing and favor of God;

The second lesson was the waiting game;

Lesson three was learning how to discern the sounds of the people;

Lesson four is living at the door of the tent of Moses;

Lesson five is learning how to except people who are anointed other than the leader you serve;

Lesson six is learning how to stand your ground when you are in the minority;

Lesson seven is accepting the awesome responsibility of your calling.