

## **The Book of Joshua**

### **Who wrote the book?**

The book's primary figure gives it its title. *Joshua* means "Yahweh saves," an appropriate name for the man who led Israel, under God's command, to victorious conquest of the Promised Land. Scholars believe that Joshua himself or a scribe under his direction penned most of the book. Early chapters include firsthand experiences (the NIV uses the pronouns "we" and "us" in Joshua 5:1, 6, for example) and military details worthy of being known and recorded by a general. Joshua 24:26 refers to Joshua writing a portion of the book himself. After Joshua's death, the high priests Eleazar or Phinehas may have supplemented some material in this book that alludes to events after the conquest (15:13–19; 19:47; 24:29–33).<sup>2</sup>

### **Where are we?**

The events of the book of Joshua span about twenty-five years, starting soon after the death of Moses (Joshua 1:1) around 1406 BC, before the conquest commenced. The conquest of Canaan took about seven years, and Joshua's final address and subsequent death came almost twenty years later. The book begins with the nation of Israel poised at the banks of the Jordan River, across from Jericho. It records the details of numerous military campaigns that defeated the inhabitants of the land. The book ends with Joshua's regathering of the nation for his final exhortation.

This history was written to the victorious Israelites who had settled the land. Though they were newly established as conquerors, Joshua reminded them that the conquest was incomplete: "very much of the land remains to be possessed" (13:1).

### **Why is Joshua so important?**

The book of Joshua records the culmination of Israel's journey to the Promised Land. Here we see God fulfill His promise to give the land of Canaan to Jacob's descendants. Joshua portrays the Lord as their general, the One who would lead His people in victorious battle if they would trust and obey.

Joshua recounted a story of contradictions. On the one hand, God gave the land that He had promised to the nation. On the other hand, the people failed to possess the land completely, allowing some inhabitants to remain. God fulfilled His side of the bargain, but the Israelites did not finish the job. The Canaanite peoples became a damaging influence on Israel as years went by.

In this book we find accounts of faithfulness: Rahab the harlot (Joshua 2:1–21), the battle of Jericho (6:1–27), and Caleb the warrior (14:6–14). We also witness disobedience and its consequences: Achan's sin (7:1) and the resulting loss at Ai (7:5), failure of some tribes to annihilate the enemy as God commanded, and even Joshua making a treaty with the Gibeonites without first seeking the Lord (9:1–27).

### **What's the big idea?**

The book of Joshua was written to the descendants of those who conquered the land, as a historical account of how they had come to settle there. It celebrates God as general, defender, and king. It shows the geographical boundaries given to each tribe of Israel. Even more significantly, the book of Joshua serves as the connecting narrative between the days of Moses and the days of the judges, during which the book was first circulated. That which Moses began and endured in the wilderness, Joshua was able to claim victoriously in the land. God's promises through the ages were being fulfilled before the people's eyes. "Not one of the good promises which the Lord had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass" (Joshua 21:45).

**Lesson Focus Verse:** *"Haven't I commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Don't be afraid. Don't be dismayed, for Yahweh your God is with you wherever you go."* **Joshua 1:9**

## **Lesson Theme: 5 Lessons from Joshua to Help You Overcome Discouragement**

Joshua was a man who faced many battles. The term “leader” was pinned on his lapel. But I often wonder if discouragement tried to become chums with Joshua. After all, one of the first things God spoke to him after he became Israel’s leader was to not be dismayed or discouraged. Let’s take a look at our friend, Joshua, in order to gain fuel for our journey in overcoming discouragement.

### **1. Remember the Commander**

Joshua’s battle with Jericho is widely known. There was a victory. But there was also a beginning, when the victory wasn’t known. Hop back to the beginning of the book of Joshua:

*"Haven't I commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Don't be afraid. Don't be dismayed, for Yahweh your God is with you wherever you go."* **Joshua 1:9**

God reassured Joshua that He was with him – even before the battle began. When we walk where we’re led and hear fear roaring, remember God and His words: *Be strong. Be courageous. Haven't I commanded you?*

### **2. Ask for Help**

Oftentimes we need others to stand alongside us in the battle. Joshua experienced this with Moses.

*"So Joshua did as Moses had told him, and fought with Amalek; and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. When Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed. When he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side. His hands were steady until sunset."* **Exodus 17:10-12**

Whether prayer warriors, mentors, pastors, counselors, or even a simple set of listening ears or a truthful tongue come alongside us, asking for help is often necessary.

### 3. Follow God's Counsel

*Yahweh said to Joshua, "Behold, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and the mighty men of valor. All of your men of war shall march around the city, going around the city once. You shall do this six days. Seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark. On the seventh day, you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. It shall be that when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, and when you hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall go up, every man straight in front of him." **Joshua 6:2-5***

I don't know about you, but I might have questioned a seven-day march. But that's what it took to overthrow Jericho. Joshua was wise. His counselor – God, was even wiser. The end result of Joshua's obedience to God was an overthrow and victory.

### 4. It's about More than Us

*"Be strong and courageous; for you shall cause this people to inherit the land which I swore to their fathers to give them." **Joshua 1:6***

When loser status hits, think big. The situation is likely about more than simply us. Darkness loves nothing better than to single us out, reminding us that it's only about us. That's not true. Our lives intersect with others' – that's God-ordained for His purposes. This battle and its outcome are about more than just us.

### 5. God is with Us

*As I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not fail you nor forsake you. **Joshua 1:5***

Joshua had just taken over the leadership role. Mighty and humble Moses was gone. Joshua had big shoes to fill, and with God's help, he did.

Sometimes we have big shoes – or even little ones - to fill as well. There may be bumps along the way, but let's promise each other to keep this verse solidly before us, okay? God isn't in the business of failures. He's not an absent Father, either.

No, when we feel like a loser, it's okay to tell those feelings to take a hike, to set them in prayer at the throne of the Almighty. After all, God is with us.