

**Joshua's Challenge to the Israelites**

September 4-10, 2011

**PRAYER:** Begin with a few moments of sharing thanks and praises in prayer.

**Leaders**, it's your call; you may choose to incorporate more information/scriptures as time allows for your small group lesson. Background: No doubt Joshua faced one of the greatest challenges of his life. The Lord never gives a task without providing the resources and help to carry out the responsibility (read Joshua 1:3, 5).

Just before his death, Moses "laid his hands" on Joshua and commissioned him for this new task. But even in view of his obvious bravery, the preparation he had for the task, and Moses' confidence in him when the time finally arrived to take over the responsibility, Joshua had fear. He understood only too well the awesomeness of God's charge and what lay ahead of him. And Joshua obviously knew in his heart that there would never be another man like Moses. Joshua was not ignorant of what lay ahead.

**Read:** Deuteronomy 31:6-8

1. How would you feel about replacing a leader whom God had publicly declared could not be replaced?

The Lord did more than reassure Joshua of His presence and power. He also spelled out very specifically and clearly the conditions for successfully taking the land. God left no "ands," "ifs," and "buts" undefined.

**Read:** Joshua 1:7-9

2. The Lord gave Joshua five direct commands, all related to His laws. Though similar, they clearly outline God's conditions for successfully taking the land of Canaan. What were these commands? ("Be careful to do according to all the law"; Do not turn from it to the right or to the left"; "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth"; "You shall meditate on it day and night"; "Be careful to do according to all that is written in it")

**Read:** Joshua 1:10-11

3. What does Joshua tell his officers?

**Read:** Joshua 1:12-18

4. What exceptions to that general command does he give to the tribes who already possess their land?
5. In turn, what do they promise? (v. 16) From their reassuring reply and from the Lord's promises, what do you infer Joshua must be feeling? (vv.16-18)

As we read about Israel in the Scriptures, we must not miss a very important principle: Ownership of the land of Israel is unconditional. It belongs to the children of Israel and eventually God will give them all of it! However, they will not possess or occupy it totally and enjoy it until they are perfectly obedient to all of the Lord's commands.

Joshua was very encouraged and strengthened because of God's direct communication. He wasted no time responding to God's charge. In Joshua 1:10-18, we are able to read how he first assumed the leadership role by calling together the officers and leaders of the people. He then issued a command which can be divided into two sections:

First, he directed his words to all of the children of Israel (vv 10-11) They were to get ready to cross over Jordan to take possession of the land of Canaan.

Secondly, he spoke specifically to the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh. He reviewed for them what had happened under Moses' leadership. Israel had captured a parcel of land on the side of Jordan opposite Canaan which Moses had promised them. But there was one important condition. They were to act as "shock troops" and pass over Jordan ahead of the rest of Israel. When the task was finished and they had helped take possession of the land, they could return to the other side of Jordan and settle permanently into the land Moses had promised them.

### **PLAN for ACTION:**

1. Am I fearful and anxious? Do I feel inadequate?
2. Do I have a correct view of God's loving concern for me – that He wants to meet my needs if I'll just let Him?
3. Do I take seriously the Word of God and its promises? Do I realize this is the greatest source of encouragement?
4. Do I truly believe that obedience of God's Word will bring blessing, now and eternally?
5. Do I really believe that God is with me – that He has not forsaken me and He never will?

### **Principles to learn from Joshua:**

1. We too can, and must, "be strong and courageous" whatever our responsibilities or position in life.
2. Obedience brings blessing.
3. God will never forsake us.

What challenges lies before you now?

How can this group pray for you this week?

To view the complete teaching from the Sunday services go to [www.centralcommunity.org/media/index.html](http://www.centralcommunity.org/media/index.html)