

# Joshua

This week's Hero of the Bible is Joshua. It may seem like I am working my way through the people that their names start with 'J', but it is just a coincidence, promise.

Let us Pray:

**Loving God we pray that as the Holy Spirit came in the wind and fire to the apostles, so your Spirit will come to us, breathing new life into our lives, and setting our hearts aflame with love, through Jesu Christ our Lord.**

There is a river that runs through Christchurch where we used to live, called the River Avon. Alison and I believed that God wanted us to leave Christchurch Baptist church where we first became Christians and go and help set up the church plant in a small village called Burton, just two miles down the road. Through much prayer God gave us a word from Joshua, Joshua 1:2 – **Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them – to the Israelites.**

We took this verse to mean, '**Now then, cross the river Avon**, because of other circumstances that surrounded the move, this made a lot of sense. We had many good times helping to build the church and learnt many new things from other people. So, this is why I went for Joshua today.

I would like to share five points that makes Joshua stand out from the crowd. Firstly, Joshua spent 20 years in Egypt, 40 years in the wilderness and then 50 in the Promised Land. God used the first 60 years of Joshua's life – as a slave for the Egyptians and an assistant to Moses, to prepare him to lead God's people into the Promised Land.

Joshua was a spiritual leader in his own right. Moses disciplined him to bring out the best in him, Exodus 24:12, but he was God's chosen one for this time. So, what does it mean to be a spiritual leader? Does it mean you have to have your life sorted, No. Does it mean you have to be without sin, No, there was only one person that qualifies for that badge of honour, Jesus.

We only need to look at Moses, and see how his life started, to see how God used him, his life certainly was not perfect. But it does mean that you must have a passion for the scriptures and a focus on God. Interesting fact, if you read the Bible just 5 pages a day from any January 1<sup>st</sup>, you will finish by Dec 26<sup>th</sup>! I thought you might find that interesting.

As we know both Moses and Joshua were called by God, and now Moses is dead. God now commissions Joshua to lead the people into the promise land. Joshua was in training a long time for this.

Point 2. - **Joshua was a man of courage.** Joshua was told four times in chapter 1 to be courageous. I never really thought of Joshua being afraid before, but perhaps he was afraid more times than the passage tells us. But he certainly did not look like he was. He overcame every obstacle the enemy put in his path and he courageously took a hold of the Promised Land. Joshua fixed his eyes on the promises of God rather than fearing the obstacles of the enemy. How many of us forget to do that?

He indeed had a great mentor in Moses, to help him learn the only way to get passed the obstacles of life, is to fix your eyes on God. God honours courage. We to, can stand on God's promises today rather than fearing the obstacles of the enemy.

Point 3. - **Joshua did not quit.** Joshua was a reliable warrior for God. He understood his purpose and his calling.

Rather than focusing on what his eyes could physically see – he focused on the word of God and faithfully obeyed every command. God uses those who faithfully obey him. We have seen in recent weeks how God uses those who are obedient, and of course one that was not obedient. But as we know God can do all things to complete his mission.

**Point 4. - Joshua did not fight his battles alone.**

**“Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it.**

**For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”** Joshua 1:6-9

Joshua did not work alone. He did not march around the city of Jericho alone, and the battles he won, he was not alone. He was a courageous leader yes because God told him to be. He was respected by his troops and had thousands of men who were faithfully fighting alongside him. The people did as he commanded because of his character.

I’m drawn again to a statement that Sir Alex Ferguson said about leadership. He said **‘My job was to make everyone understand that the impossible was possible. That’s the difference between leadership and management.’**

The same is true for Joshua. He wasn't a manager, he was a leader and he played in a team. To do any job, working as a team makes all the difference. Working on your own, may mean you get the job done the way you want it, but it takes you three times as long to complete the task. The more you do that, the less effective you become. God created us to live in community and work in teams, to be the most effective we can be, remember Nehemiah?

**Point 5 – The secret to Joshua's success was his devotion to the Word of God.** Because of the training that God gave Joshua; Joshua knew his God intimately. He knew the word of God and he did not turn to the left or the right, he stayed focused. He meditated on it day and night and that was the secret to his success. The most important thing in life is our walk with God. It is not about ticking off boxes but rather, it is about a real relationship that is alive and intimate. It is about a relationship where you deeply love God and are not ashamed of Him. It is essential that we know God's Word, believe God's Word and obey God's Word, in order to please Him. So, what can we take away from Joshua?

So, here are a few questions for you to ponder.

Do you feel that you are waiting on God for something? Then allow me to encourage you, keep hanging on. God is preparing us for what He has next. He wants us to surrender all of our lives to him and trust that in His good timing, He will use our story, our struggles, and our talents for His glory.

But there again, is there something in your life that feels risky? We are all in a spiritual battle of some sort. It takes courage to stand up to sin in this world. It takes courage to speak the truth in love. It takes courage to forgive and take risks in relationships. It takes courage to trust God with our finances and our children and our futures.

Only this morning Ali and I were praying for our grandchildren that when they grow up they will meet husbands and wives that know the Lord, they are 9, 6, 3 and 2yrs old.

Our stories are not finished yet. We just need to be patient, (something I am not very good at) and be ready for the next task God has for us. Joshua was ready to fight with all his heart.

Are you a warrior for God? Our whole purpose and calling is to glorify God right where we are. The problem is, so many of us focus on what we see.

I come back to Alex Ferguson: He not only built a team that was for a particular season, but he also planned for two or three seasons ahead. But even that is temporary and physical. The point is, there is an eternal and spiritual world that we cannot see that is more real than our physical world. But to get through this world, even more so now with the pandemic, is to trust the word of the Lord, and faithfully obey his every command.

Do not be a lone ranger. We need the family of God and the family of God needs us. We can all achieve more if we are willing to work in a team, because we are not doing it for ourselves, we are doing it to glorify God, and that is why He has given all of us different gifts to use, to be able to support each other rather than running around like a headless chicken!

Let us Pray.

Go forth into the world in peace and be of good courage; hold fast that which is good; render to no one evil for evil; strengthen the faint hearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; honour all people; love and serve the Lord rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Blessings, Mike