

**Pastor's Picks**  
**“What it takes to conquer new territory”**  
**Joshua 1**

**Intro:** I'm sure many of us have favorite bible passages. This passage has been one of my favorites since I was in High School. It has brought me encouragement for decades. It has been one of those key passages I return to when I feel lost; when I don't know what to do. It has been foundational in my life and has helped define how I have followed Jesus for years. It is Joshua chapter 1. In this chapter, God gives Joshua 4 key ingredients for conquering new territory. He tells Joshua; “This is how you move forward in life.” After 30 plus years of putting this to the test, I am here to tell you it is true!

- Summarize context of Joshua 1
- In order to conquer new territory in your own personal life, your marriage, as a parent or in ministry, it requires 4 key qualities. The very same ingredients God gave to Joshua for success are the same for us. If you desire forward movement in any area in your life as a follower of Jesus, these qualities must be growing in your life.

**1. Be strong**

*Josh. 1:6 “**Be strong** and courageous, for you are the one who will lead these people to possess all the land I swore to their ancestors I would give them.” (NLT)*

The reality of this world is that it is tough...it's hard...nothing good is going to come easy. Without strength, you and I will not make it. Let me give you 2 areas of strength that are essential.

- Strength of your resolve
  - This has to do with your resolve in what needs to happen. Half-hearted commitments just don't get it done.
  - This is not about physical strength; although that is not a bad thing. This is about your internal strength. To take new ground in any area it requires a certain level of internal resolve that refuses to quit.
  - WHY? Because it is hard...it is not easy. God did not hand Joshua and the people of Israel the Promised Land. They had to go take it! Just because it was promised to them didn't mean they did not have to fight the battles to possess it.
  - So often, we think God's promises are experienced passively. If I sit here long enough the promises of God will be real...the power of God will be real. At any moment, I am going to have this epiphany.
  - Where we experience the promises of God is in the battle; in the chaos, in the struggle of moving forward into enemy territory and taking new ground.
  - It takes a certain kind of resolve to not quit when things get tough. I can't tell you how many times this thought has crossed my mind. “It's not worth it.” Without resolve we will eventually quit.

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- I see this in the gym every year. People want to work out but lack the internal resolve to keep going when it becomes difficult.
- Strength of your responsibility
  - This has to do with your understanding that no one else is going to do this for you. Of course we benefit from others. Of course we overcome with the help of others. BUT, God told Joshua; *“you are the one who will lead these people...”* This is YOUR responsibility.
  - When you are strong in your responsibility, you embrace your part. You do not expect others to do what God has asked you to do. You do not try to hand off to others what you need to do.
  - Without this strong sense of responsibility, we never walk into our role God has called us to and will never walk into new territory.
  - Each one of us have areas where Jesus has said to us; “You are the one...”. Each of us must take up the mantle of responsibility and say; “This piece is mine”; “I must fulfill this responsibility”
    - Men, next week is Father’s Day – Let me shoot straight with you. God has called you to be the spiritual leaders of your family. “You are the one”. This is not your wife’s responsibility. This mantle has been entrusted to you alone!
    - If you want to take new ground in your marriage...in your family...then you must decide to be strong in your responsibility. Be strong in your resolve. Embrace this role as from God.

## 2. Be courageous

*Josh. 1:7 “Be strong and very courageous...” (NLT)*

Here is another value that just doesn’t get talked about much anymore. God values courage. Courage is essential for growth and taking new territory.

- Courage runs towards the battle
  - Courage is demonstrated when we run towards the battle and not away from it. There are battles worth fighting. This is courage.
  - Your marriage is a battle worth fighting for. Your kids are a battle worth fighting for. Your church...your community...the Gospel...the transformation of our city...hungry people...Your own growth and transformation.
  - Courageous people choose to make a difference. Courageous people do not settle for the status quo or accept defeat. Courageous people choose to risk rather than embrace comfort.
    - The Israelites could have stayed on the other side of the Jordan river - explain
  - Courage is required to take new ground because new ground doesn’t come to you by being passive. You have to take it. This requires courage.

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- It requires courage to be the church that Jesus is calling us to be
  - Purchase and remodel property
  - Develop ministries to meet pressing community needs
  - Overcome huge financial barriers
  - Overcome old thinking
- Are you running towards the battle or away from it? What battle do you have that you know you need to engage in?
  - When you gossip rather than fix the relationship, that is cowardly.
  - When you post something mean on Facebook rather than meet face to face, that's cowardly.
  - When you refuse to deal with the issues facing your marriage, that's cowardly.
  - When we refuse to own our own brokenness and yet blame others, that's cowardly.
- There are simply battles that need to be fought. There are things worth fighting for in this life. Are you running towards these battles or retreating from them. Maybe it is time to be courageous.
- Courage overcomes the odds
  - When God told Joshua to be very courageous, He wasn't kidding. When you read the book of Joshua, you see that they overcame 31 different kings and their kingdoms. 31 vs 1. Courage overcomes the odds.
  - Courage is not demonstrated because it makes sense or because it looks feasible on a spread sheet. Courage follows the directive. Courage fights the battles that MUST be fought to take ground. Courage hears the voice of our leader and we follows Him into the battle.
  - I often think about our journey as a church. The odds were completely against us. Do you realize 80% of all church plants fail. We had no money or outside assistance. The odds said it should not work.
  - Courage embraces Jesus ordained risk. It's not risk for risk sake. Courage is following Jesus into new experiences with Him. Joshua entered the Promised Land because God told Him to take that risk. We do the same.
  - The reason this type of courage overcomes the odds is because Jesus is the one who told us to fight this battle. When you follow Jesus into the unknown the odds are always stacked in your favor. HOW?
  - Courageously following Jesus is the great equalizer regardless what is taking place in the physical realm. We courageously follow and Jesus makes up the difference.
    - When we began planning to have our first Sunday, God provided the janitor
    - When we needed to move from the school, God provided a vacant grocery store.
    - When we needed office space, God provided an office building

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- When we needed over \$1 million for a down payment, God came through again.

Where do you need to be courageous?

### 3. Be obedient

*Josh. 1:7 “Be careful to obey all the instructions Moses gave you. Do not deviate from them, turning either to the right or to the left. Then you will be successful in everything you do.”*

(NLT) Who doesn't need to the key to success? Here it is!

- Obedience is the key to success
  - This principal is from cover to cover in the Bible. Obedience = Blessing. Although this principal is throughout God's word it amazes me how many church going people still do not believe this.
  - Selective obedience does not = success. We do not get to decide which principals we like, which ones we will follow, which ones we can ignore, which ones are not PC.
  - God told Joshua that the key to his success taking and claiming what was promised was his commitment to obedience. If he would follow and obey, they would be successful in claiming the Promised Land.
  - This principal has not changed in thousands of years. Obedience is still the key to success.
  - Some of you struggle with the obedience thing because you think God is trying to control you, restrict you, or possibly ruin your fun. Truthfully, it is just the opposite. Obedience to His word is what gives you freedom, unleashes your true potential and gives you the greatest joys of your life.
  - I have put this principal to the test for decades in every arena of my life. (From relationships / marriage / parenting / work / money / recreation / stress / pain / and I have found it to be absolutely true.
  - Obedience = blessing. Obedience = success.
- Obedience trumps human understanding
  - It's not that our own understanding is irrelevant. God did give us minds and He does expects us to use them. BUT, when it comes down to a choice to either trust what our minds tells us versus trusting what the word of God tells us, we need to trust God's word.
  - Our understanding is limited and flawed. This is why following is more important than understanding. Obedience will always trump human reasoning.
  - The story of Joshua provides evidence of this. (Summarize taking Jericho)
  - Understanding why God asked them to do this was irrelevant. Obedience is what brought the victory.
  - Our lives are no different. We are called to follow first. If you wait until you understand, you won't follow much.

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What is your commitment to obedience?

#### 4. Be aware

*Josh. 1:9 “This is my command—be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the **LORD your God is with you wherever you go.**” (NLT)*

*Jer. 20:11 “But the **LORD is with me like a dread champion...**” (NLT)* I love this perspective. You mess with me...you mess with God who is with me. Strength, obedience and courage are all connected to this one fact: awareness of God’s presence with me.

- Awareness of God’s presence
  - I love that God reminded Joshua he was not taking new ground by himself. The presence of God was a foundational promise in this adventure. “I will be with you Joshua.”
  - The more awareness we have of God’s continual presence with us the more strength, courage and obedience we will live. If you think you have to do all this by yourself, it literally saps these qualities from your life.
  - It is a well - documented fact the impact another person can have on performance. When you have a “buddy” you can simply do more. This is why work-out partners matter / running partners / military buddies in battle / Being alone in battle is a recipe for defeat.
  - God reassures Joshua he is not alone in this. “I will be with you wherever you go.”
  - The more you grow in your awareness of God’s presence with you, the more ground you will take. HOW do I grow in this? Choose it.
    - Summarize how to “practice the presence of God.”

- Awareness of God’s resources
  - Here is a beautiful truth: With the presence of God comes the unlimited resources of God.

*Eph. 3:16 “I pray that from his glorious, **unlimited resources** he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit.” (NLT)*

- God has unlimited resources for us to conquer and overcome whatever territory He is leading us in to. It doesn’t matter if it is relational, financial, emotional, spiritual, physical. God has unlimited resources for it all.
- When you are aware of His presence and His power, taking new ground just doesn’t seem that intimidating any longer.
- This has been my journey...This has been our journey as a church. What Jesus is leading us in to will always be more than what we have ever done before. BUT, because we have tasted and seen His presence and power before, there is an assurance we have.
- We know that His presence is leading us and His unlimited resources will provide for us.

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Lisa and I had an experience a few weeks ago on vacation that I believe illustrates all of this. We did the largest zip line in Costa Rica. The largest run was almost one mile long. They launched you from a mountain top. (PIC) This is a great illustration how our relationship with God works.

- It took some internal strength of resolve to do this.
- It took some courage to do this. You had to walk towards and up the platform.
- It took obedience to do this. There was very specific equipment to wear and instructions to follow.
- It was the awareness that you are safe that made it all fun (explain half body cradle) The bible says we are united with Christ / abide with Christ / we are harnessed together with Jesus. RESULT: Exhilaration of taking new ground – new experiences with Jesus.

Where is Jesus calling you to take new territory?

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