



COMMITTED TO THE CAUSE

WEEK 9
07.31.16

FOCUS VERSE

Judges 2:7

And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel.

LESSON TEXT

Numbers 14:6-9

6 And Joshua the son of Nun, and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, which were of them that searched the land, rent their clothes:

7 And they spake unto all the company of the children of Israel, saying, The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land.

8 If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey.

9 Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not.

Numbers 27:18, 23

18 And the LORD said unto Moses, Take thee Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay thine hand upon him;

.....

23 And he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as the LORD commanded by the hand of Moses.

Deuteronomy 31:7-8

7 And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou must go with this people unto the land which the LORD hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it.

8 And the LORD, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed.

Deuteronomy 34:9

9 And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the LORD commanded Moses.



FOCUS THOUGHT

The committed leader will always keep the cause in focus and remain true to those who share the vision.



CULTURE CONNECTION

Jim Elliot

As a teen seeking the will of God for my life, I was greatly influenced by the life of Jim Elliot, one of the five missionaries martyred trying to take the message of Christ to the Auca Indians of Ecuador. He said,

- “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.”
- “Wherever you are, be all there! Live to the hilt every situation you believe to be the will of God.”
- “Forgive me for being so ordinary while claiming to know so extraordinary a God.”
- “Let not our longing slay the appetite of our living.”
- “God always gives his best to those who leave the choice with him.” ([http://www.](http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/2125255_Jim_Elliot)

[goodreads.com/author/quotes/2125255_Jim_Elliot](http://www.goodreads.com/author/quotes/2125255_Jim_Elliot), accessed February 15, 2015).

To me, Elliot epitomizes commitment. He was totally focused on doing the will of God, knowing that doing so might cost him his life—which it did. I still weep when I watch *Beyond the Gates of Splendor*, a documentary of the five men and their families. Conviction grips me as I ask myself if my dedication with the Holy Ghost is as great as theirs was. Somehow they were able to transfer their commitment to their wives and children, who continued to minister to the same Indians who speared their husbands and fathers to death.

Elliot’s commitment kept his life focused on his call and helped him impart that vision to the next generation. What about yours?

OUTLINE

I. JOSHUA’S COMMITMENT

- A. Dissatisfied with the Negative Report
- B. Stayed Focused on God’s Provision

II. FAITH IN THE LORD

- A. Joshua’s Commitment Was Tested
- B. Joshua Was Called to the Cause

III. COMMITMENT WHEN PROMISE WAS DEFERRED

- A. Courage to Believe Again
- B. Commitment Brings Victory

IV. JOSHUA’S LASTING COMMITMENT

- A. Committed to Moses
- B. Called Israel to Commit
- C. Left a Legacy for Future Generations

CONTEMPLATING THE TOPIC

Fear is one of the most common human experiences. Fear of consequences, fear of the unknown, or fear of the future can have paralyzing effects. It may seem shocking that some would choose to remain in a miserable situation that is predictable rather than

step out into new, uncharted waters for fear of the unknown. Many times Christians live beneath their privileges because they lack faith to trust God for the new path. For too many believers, obstacles overwhelm them, causing them to turn away from their commitments to Christ.

William Ward once said, “Discouragement is dissatisfaction with the past, distaste for the present and distrust of the future. It is ingratitude for the blessings of yesterday, indifference to the opportunities of today, and insecurity regarding strength for tomorrow.” (Used by permission. ©Today in the Word, April 1989, a ministry of Moody Global Ministries.) When one’s focus is on obstacles rather than God’s provision, it becomes easy for faith to waver.

After four hundred years of bitter slavery, God delivered the Israelites by a miraculous exodus from Egypt, walking safely on dry ground through the Red Sea. Yet within days of their deliverance, they began murmuring because the water at Marah was bitter. The people of Israel had already lost their faith in God and His ability to intervene. They had

been delivered from the place of their captivity but not from the spirit that had them bound. Unfortunately, that spirit was still with them when they came near Canaan.

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

In Numbers 13:1–2, God commanded Moses to send twelve spies into the land of Canaan, declaring that He was giving that land to the children of Israel. Their mission was to discover more about the land and the people who inhabited it. Specifically, they were charged with reporting on the quality and goods of the land, the strength and numbers of the people, and any barriers that would impede them in overtaking the land. Their responsibility was to conduct reconnaissance on behalf of their people and report back to Moses and to Israel.

Nothing kills enthusiasm and faith like a negative attitude.

The remainder of the chapter describes their forty-day journey and their ensuing report. The Promised Land was as amazing as they might have imagined: grapes, pomegranates, milk, and honey. Yet, despite all the land had to offer, ten of the spies allowed fear to get the best of them, stating that the challenges required to possess the land were too great for them. They feared the people (some of whom they called giants) and their large, fortified cities. Comparing themselves to the giants, the spies declared that they themselves were as grasshoppers in their own eyes and also in the eyes of the giants (Numbers 13:33).

The opinion of ten spies was that their enemies were too powerful, too numerous, and too overwhelming. Sadly, these men focused on their circumstances rather than focusing on God. It is an easy thing to do. The ten spies saw a fight they could not win. Instead of trusting God to accomplish what they could not do on their own, they gave up. This attitude quickly spread through the Israelite camp.

Nothing kills enthusiasm and faith like a negative attitude.

I. JOSHUA'S COMMITMENT

A. Dissatisfied with the Negative Report

If the report of the ten spies squelched the faith of the people, it had the opposite effect upon Joshua and Caleb, the other two spies. Passionately, Joshua stood boldly to repudiate the report of his counterparts. While the people bemoaned their situation, called for new leadership, and grumbled concerning their desire to have died in Egypt rather than be faced with this challenge, Joshua proclaimed a positive message of faith in God. With bold faith, Joshua declared:

"If the LORD delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey. Only rebel not ye against the LORD, neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is departed from them, and the LORD is with us: fear them not" (Numbers 14:8–9).

Joshua's rallying cry did little to change the hearts of the people. In fact, the response of the congregation was to call for stoning him to death. (See Numbers 14:10.) God was so displeased with the congregation's response that had it not been for the intervention of Moses' intercessory prayer, God would have destroyed the whole nation and raised up a new nation from Moses. Instead, the people of Israel were compelled to wander in the wilderness for forty years before returning to the border of the Promised Land. During this time the people of Israel twenty years old and up who had murmured against the Lord died in the wilderness. Joshua and Caleb were spared because of their faith in God and their good report of the Promised Land.

B. Stayed Focused on God's Provision

Joshua and Caleb refused the negative report of the other spies. What made them different from the congregation of Israel? They were driven by faith, not by fear. Joshua gave no space for doubt. Doubt had overtaken the

Israelites because their focus was wrong. Their lack of faith in God was a disease that plagued their souls.

The majority of the Israelites focused on their circumstances rather than remembering who was in control, who had delivered them, and what He had promised them. Instead of focusing on the blessings of God and the victories He had already won on their behalf, they focused on the difficulties they encountered. As a result they were filled with despair. The surest way to be overcome by fear and discouragement is to focus on challenging circumstances and imagined negative results instead of focusing on God's promises and His ability to provide for our needs and to intervene in our circumstances.

However, Joshua's commitment and faithful service to God enabled him to continue believing in God's promises instead of being swayed by the fear and doubt of the majority of the Israelites.

II. FAITH IN THE LORD

A. Joshua's Commitment Was Tested

It seems difficult to reconcile how the same people who had marched victoriously through the Red Sea could not trust God's promise for Canaan. They had seen how the mighty hand of God had protected them from the plagues that destroyed Egypt and had brought them safely through the Red Sea on dry land, while their oppressors, who had pursued them, were drowned in the rushing waters as the Red Sea came together again. Nevertheless, the fearful report of the ten spies solidified the doubt and dread that gripped the people, and they refused to claim God's promise.

In such a faithless environment, what could be more shocking than the resolve of Joshua and Caleb in the face of such utter unbelief? Joshua knew that if God called Israel to this new challenge, He would make the way for them to overcome. His faith was bolstered by the testimony of what God had already accomplished for them.

Joshua's faith, however, was tested. In direct opposition to Joshua's plea not to fear the Canaanites or rebel against the Lord, the people rebelled against God and refused to take possession of the blessings awaiting

them. Because they refused to trust Him, they would not follow Him. The decision to disobey is always costly, but in this instance the Israelites paid an exorbitant price. Not only did they lose relationship with God, but they also lost His promise. The people of Israel stopped short of receiving the promise because of fear. Failure to take God at His Word will always result in a price far more costly than surrendering to His call.

Israel missed out on God's best for them and instead spent the next forty years wandering in the wilderness rather than enjoying the land God had prepared for them—one year for each day the spies were in Canaan. As a result, the older generation died without receiving God's promise. The only two spies to enter the Promised Land were Joshua and Caleb. Because of Israel's sin, Joshua had to wander through the wilderness along with the others, testing his resolve to remain committed to God's call in the face of opposition.

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B. Joshua Was Called to the Cause

The bold passion Joshua demonstrated at the initial scouting of Canaan had developed into a mature, unshakable faith forty years later. The faith he proclaimed before the congregation was not in vain, and God honored that faith by allowing Him to lead Israel into the promise, albeit deferred. Joshua's commitment to God's purpose led to his selection as Moses' successor, hand-picked by God. "And Moses did as the LORD commanded him . . . and he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as the LORD commanded" (Numbers 27:22-23). Possession of the land would not

come without battles, but God would bring them victory.

“And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou must go with this people unto the land which the LORD hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it. And the LORD, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee; fear not, neither be dismayed” (Deuteronomy 31:7–8).

Following Moses’ death, God commissioned Joshua to boldly take possession of Israel’s inheritance. God had prepared Joshua for the task of leading Israel to take Canaan. He foretold of Joshua’s crossing the Jordan River (Joshua 1:2).

As the new leader of God’s people, this nation with a history of grumbling complaints and rebellious disobedience, Joshua likely needed reassurance God would guide him through such a difficult task. The weight of responsibility was heavier now that the mantle of leadership rested upon him. It is one thing to follow God’s voice for oneself, but when a person is responsible for the well-being of an entire faith community, the stakes are much higher.

When God called Joshua, He did so with rich promises of guidance, authority, and protection. God assured Joshua: “Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses” (Joshua 1:3). Since Moses had already commissioned Joshua, why did God go to such great lengths to assure him? Perhaps God knew that Joshua had faith but he needed more courage to lead the people of Israel. God commanded Joshua three times (in verses 6, 7, and 9) to be courageous; because God had promised His protection, Joshua had the courage to face whatever situations arose and to see the Lord’s deliverance of His people.

III. COMMITMENT WHEN PROMISE WAS DEFERRED

God promised victory, and He promised His favor upon Joshua. God’s promises, however,

came with a charge to remain committed to his calling.

“Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success” (Joshua 1:7–8).

A. Courage to Believe Again

God commanded Joshua to be faithful to His Word because the promises hinged upon that. The key to Joshua’s success was what he had demonstrated forty years earlier: complete reliance upon God and His Word. He was ready to walk by faith at the first sight of Canaan, and a generation later, Joshua stood prepared to cross the Jordan River through the Lord’s leading.

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After a long, difficult journey, a new generation of Israelites had come near to the Promised Land. The Lord had provided all they needed in the wilderness and had proven faithful. But there was one more barrier—the Jordan. They had to cross that river.

The fathers and grandfathers of the previous generation had the experience of crossing the

Red Sea. Now their children would experience God's power for themselves. God had chosen Joshua to lead them to this crowning victory because he had served faithfully, committed to God's cause. Joshua's faith and courage were as strong as, or perhaps even stronger than, they had been the first time the Israelites stood at the border of Canaan.

Joshua marched Israel to the banks of the Jordan. He had prepared, had heard God's promises, and had stepped out in faith. He did not know the manner in which their passage would come, but Joshua knew a miracle was in store. He proclaimed to the people: "Sanctify yourselves: for to morrow the LORD will do wonders among you" (Joshua 3:5). Joshua implored the Israelites to purify their hearts and release anything that was unlike God. The previous generation of unbelievers had died, with only Joshua and Caleb remaining, and Joshua desired a positive outcome this time.

The journey is just as important as the destination because transformation and equipping for God's purpose take place on the journey.

B. Commitment Brings Victory

According to God's plan, Joshua instructed the priests to take the Ark of the Covenant and go before the people (Joshua 3:6). After further instructions, the priests carrying the Ark led the way to the river. According to verse 15, the Jordan River overflowed its banks during "all the time of harvest." At the time of their crossing, the river was at flood stage! But the faith of the priests was met with miraculous favor, for as soon as their feet "dipped in the edge of the water . . . the waters which came

down from upstream stood still, and rose in a heap very far away" (Joshua 3:15–16, NKJV).

The priests with the Ark stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan River (verse 17). Despite the river having been in flood stage, there was no trace of mud. Meanwhile, all the people (approximately two million) crossed over the Jordan. For years this younger generation had heard about the Red Sea crossing of their grandparents and parents. But on that day, they experienced the miraculous intervention of God for themselves.

We can glean a crucial life principle from this story, one applicable to all generations: There will always be obstacles on the road to our Promised Land, and we must fight to overcome them. Red Seas look different and giants will come in all forms, but they always come. Make no mistake—obeying the will of God does not come without a struggle. However, these challenges can become stepping-stones in our walk with God. In overcoming the challenges, we experience God's power and develop a deeper faith. The journey is just as important as the destination because transformation and equipping for God's purpose take place on the journey.

IV. JOSHUA'S LASTING COMMITMENT

A. Committed to Moses

Before Joshua was chosen to succeed Moses as Israel's leader, he spent a number of years in preparation for that role. The first mention of Joshua is in Exodus 17:9. Early in Israel's wilderness wanderings, when Amalek came to fight against Israel, Moses called Joshua to get an army together to fight against Amalek. Israel was victorious in the battle.

We do not know what qualities Moses had previously seen in Joshua, but Moses had determined Joshua was capable of being a leader. In Exodus 24:13, Joshua was referred to as Moses' minister (servant or assistant). As such, Joshua would have spent much time with Moses during which he would have observed Moses' decisions and actions. Moses became Joshua's mentor when Joshua was a young man. (See Exodus 33:11.) Moses' mentoring by exhortation and by example no doubt had an enormous impact on Joshua.

What better training could Joshua have had for his role in leading the people of Israel? Perhaps Joshua's commitment to Moses as his servant was foundational to his commitment to God and to the people of Israel.

B. Called Israel to Commit

Joshua's faith and commitment through the years ultimately brought him and the people of Israel into the Promised Land. God's will was for them to conquer the land, taking it for their possession as God had promised Abraham.

Their first military victory was conquering the city of Jericho. Although Joshua had led an army against Amalek early in the journey to the Promised Land, he did not depend on his own wisdom and experience to determine how to defeat Jericho. The Lord gave him specific instructions, which Joshua relayed to the people, and they followed them to the letter. As a result, God gave Israel victory over Jericho.

The Lord gave them victory in other battles as well, using other means of conquering the enemy. The one constant was that God gave Joshua instructions, Joshua relayed them to the people, and the people carried them out. In one instance, the Lord assisted by sending large hailstones to fall on the enemy soldiers as they fled from the Israelite army. (See Joshua 10:8–11.)

Time went by, and after the land had been divided among the tribes of Israel, Joshua called the people together. He was now one hundred ten years old and knew his death was imminent. Before he died, he wanted to remind the people of the great things God had done for them and to encourage them to stay committed to God. There were still nations to be conquered (Joshua 23:4–5), and Joshua encouraged the people with words similar to those with which the Lord had encouraged him after the death of Moses: "Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left" (Joshua 23:6). (See Joshua 1:7.)

Joshua also warned the people of the dire consequences if, instead of driving out the heathen nations, they became friendly with them, began to intermarry, and started served their gods. The people promised they would

serve the Lord: "And the people said unto Joshua, The LORD our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey" (Joshua 24:24).

Joshua's commitment was an excellent example to the people of Israel. Because of his leadership, "Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that overlived Joshua, and which had known all the works of the LORD, that he had done for Israel" (Joshua 24:31).

C. Left a Legacy for Future Generations

The bold, decisive manner in which Joshua obeyed God in all things large and small left a legacy for future generations to follow. As a servant and as a leader, Joshua followed God's leading and depended on Him for direction. Joshua's wisdom did not come from attempting to appease the people. His wisdom came from God. (See Joshua 3:9.) His giftedness came from knowing the source of his strength and following the only voice that could bring deliverance.

One such example took place just after the people of Israel had crossed the Jordan River. God commanded Joshua to choose one man from each of the twelve tribes of Israel to go back to the middle of the river, to the place where the priests' feet stood firm. Each man was to take a stone from that spot to serve as a sign of God's miraculous deliverance. (See Joshua 4:1–9.)

Those stones were carried with them until they reached Gilgal, where Joshua set them up as a memorial. When future generations passed by, the children would ask what the large stones meant. Parents were instructed to testify of how "the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD" (Joshua 4:7). Those stones would forever serve as a memorial to the children of Israel and their descendants. They would be tangible reminders of the supernatural hand of God who moved on their behalf when they obeyed His call. From that time forward, those rocks would remind the nation that God always keeps His promises.

Because of the Israelites' rebellion, they endured the wilderness journey. But during that journey, they learned to trust God's voice. For Israel, the wilderness journey became a

necessity in getting to the Promised Land. For Joshua, the wilderness journey prepared him to become a pivotal leader in the history of Israel, leaving a legacy for all believers to follow.

INTERNALIZING THE MESSAGE

Many kinds of obstacles may be encountered on the road of life. If looking at an obstacle from the wrong perspective, believers can get discouraged and may decide to turn back from following God's path. Today's barriers to our promise may not be giants or a river. Maybe the barrier is a bad habit, an addiction, an attitude, or a difficulty at work or with family. Whatever the obstacle, the end result is the same: barriers that are not overcome keep Christians from being where God wants them and keep them from being the people He has called them to be.

Through the story of Joshua leading Israel across the Jordan River into Canaan, the Bible provides another testimony of God's faithfulness to bring His people through any circumstance. Joshua trusted God rather than relying on his own wisdom or strength, and he inspired a fearful nation to become a faithful nation. The good news is that if God did it for them, He will do it today! If it is God's will, He will grant us the resources to overcome all obstacles and reach our destination. Regardless of Satan's opposition, God will prepare, equip,

and encourage His children to be strong and courageous.

Just as Joshua called the children of Israel to make a commitment to God, people today are challenged by God's Word to take a stand for Jesus Christ. The Christian walk must never become one of stagnancy, nor should a Christian be fearful of following God's voice. Crossing the rivers of life may not be easy. Obedience to God's commands requires faith. In fact, it is often easier not to do anything; it may seem easier to remain wandering in the wilderness. That path may seem safer, but that view is dangerous because it places one's security in self rather than in God. Regardless of the obstacles, life is more blessed when moving forward toward God's promises.

On the other side of the challenge is the promise God has given. If we fight obstacles with His strength, He is faithful to keep His promises even if we have failed Him. Why does God keep His Word, even when humanity falls short? Joshua 4:24 provides key insight regarding God's faithfulness despite our failures. He does the spectacular in us and through us in order to bring Himself glory! God's purpose for His people is that through them, the world might know Him. His mighty acts through us are for a testimony of His glory to the world, and our commitment to His cause will yield eternal results in God's kingdom. ■

REFLECTIONS

- What characteristics enable a believer to remain committed to the cause of Christ regardless of circumstances or opposition?
- In today's lesson, in what ways did Joshua and Caleb model commitment?
- What is the most difficult aspect for you in attempting to be committed to God's cause?
- Why does it sometimes seem easier to let fear rule in our hearts than to walk in faith?
- How can believers remain committed to their calling in a culture that does not value the gospel message?