

Any leader has to identify problems and solutions fast. They have to get people taking initiative and hold them accountable. They must manage change in an instant access world. They allow others to use their strengths to achieve high level performance. They break down walls and get people working together. These are basic skills for leaders. We could identify more. We could create a list of every mandatory characteristic, every skill, and every task they have to handle. Could you be a leader? Are you already a leader?

It might have happened that you were called to be a leader at some point, and the situation did not go well. Maybe you were overwhelmed with the responsibility. Maybe you were underwhelmed by people's response to you. Maybe you simply wanted to bow out and get away from the pressure. Leadership experiments can go well or horribly wrong. Leadership isn't for everyone.

The man in the first lesson didn't have a choice. He was selected by God and so his leadership position was set in stone. But God didn't leave him wandering with little self confidence; he didn't leave him without skills, and certainly didn't leave him without encouragement. As we watch how this leader under God reacts we get a good example for ourselves...

**You are a leader for Christ**  
**Where a leader should focus**  
**What a leader should be doing**

**"Moses my servant is dead."** Those words hit Joshua like a ton of bricks. He knew death would claim his favorite spiritual leader eventually, but not now. Not at this pivotal time in Israelite history. They were about to set foot into the Promised Land. God's promise to the Israelites for over 400 years was now about to be given to them. Moses had led the Israelites through some of their toughest times. He had proved strong as a leader for the last 50 years or so. But Moses was not to see the Promised Land. Now Joshua was in charge.

The nation of Israel at this time was huge. Roughly twice the population of the entire metro Oklahoma City area, two million people plus were now all looking at Joshua to lead them. Every person from Joshua's generation was dead. The people only knew Moses as their leader. Joshua was like the backup quarterback. You know his name but you don't want to have to use him. Now they needed assurance he could step up. They had been this close to the land before and been turned away because of sin. There would be military battles to plan, fight, and win. There would be directions to give and strategies to work out. Put yourself in Joshua's sandals for a minute. With all this pressure, with the fate of a nation resting on his shoulders, where should he focus?

Remember the moment you owned a home for the first time or had your first apartment. Think back to your first day on your first job. Or remind yourself of the moments after your child was born. Were you up for the challenge? What would you do if the water from the sink starting leaking, a branch fell on your roof, or the driveway cracked? How would you manage learning the computer, the pay system, the filing system, and the deadlines? Did you have the skills to put the baby in the car seat, warm up the bottle, put the child to bed properly, or hold the child the right way? Could you handle these situations and the hundred others? What if you messed up? What if you weren't strong enough, smart enough, or good enough? With all that pressure where should you focus?

The pressure of the moment might have overwhelmed Joshua if God hadn't done something. God knew Joshua was overwhelmed, that's why he stated his encouragement three times. **"Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. Be strong and very courageous. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous."** Like a coach saying to the backup, "Right here, focus on me, you can do this." God comes to Joshua and says, "Look at me. Don't focus on other things. Focus right here on me." Joshua would never succeed focusing on all the problems and issues he immediately faced. He wouldn't succeed focused on himself. God's encouragement to him was to focus on God's promises. And God was promising great things: military victories, God's presence always, and finally the Promised Land. Any leader focused on God and trusting in him would be a good leader. Joshua was that leader.

God won't allow you to focus on you. It's not on your abilities, strengths, or anything else. Success as a leader focuses on God. How do you know Christ will get you through life? **"This is how we know that he lives in us: we know it by the Spirit he gave us."** God's promise. How do you know God's promises will happen? **"God is not a man that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should change his mind. Does he speak and then not act? Does he promise and not fulfill?"** God's not just giving a motivational line when he says **"Be strong and courageous"**. That's the very promise of God strengthening our hearts to trust. Christian leaders here this morning must focus not on themselves but on God's promises. And his promises are always centered in Christ Jesus. So as Christian leaders we focus on Christ.

If you were studying nursing you wouldn't go to engineering school. If you were a mail carrier you wouldn't go to the hardware store to pick up the mail and deliver it. Each job has requirements and tasks unique to that job. Whoever wants to do those jobs must conform to those requirements and tasks. A leader does the same thing. Joshua was leading God's people, so it was imperative that he listen to God. With his focus clearly on God he could get to doing what a leader should be doing.

Al Davis, owner of the Oakland Raiders who died recently, was often quoted as saying, "Just win baby". That's a great one-liner. But the coaches still developed game plans, still diagramed plays, and still coached their players. "Just win baby" isn't enough to actually allow anyone to win. Joshua was thankful to God for the faith strengthening words. But he still needed to know what to do going forward. **"Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go."** Notice there's nothing about plans or strategy for battle. No orders to send out scouts. No directions on which way to go to best attack. God wasn't interested in giving Joshua skills to be a military commander or the nation's president. God would work those things out. What God wanted was a leader doing his will and his will is being in the Word. Everything that Joshua wanted to know about what to do was in the book, the Bible as Joshua had it. Go regularly there and as a leader he wouldn't be left wondering what to do.

You try leadership on the Oklahoma City Metro Library system and you'll find 362 different books. They've got what General Patten says about characteristics of good leadership. You can find whether planning to yell more or less is good. You could learn the 9 natural laws of leadership or the 108 skills of natural born leaders. I'm sure they're all perfectly fine books. But they are hopelessly out of touch with what a Christian leader should be doing. Our own ideas of what a leader should be doing get us quickly off track. Being off track we go against God and sometimes even work against him.

Back to the Word is the only place to find Christ's forgiveness for our lack of leadership abilities. It's the only place to find out what God has to say about what we should be doing. It gives wonderful comforts like what were given to Joshua. **"Meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."** The success promised from doing what the Word says is only backed up by a promise that the Lord will be with us always. Jesus said it this way, **"I will be with you until the very end of the age."** God will give you the strength to make it through whatever he puts in front of you. You only need to stay connected to him through his Word.

Sometimes we're leaders in surprising ways. Not everyone is a boss or the owner of a small business. But husbands are leaders. Parents are leaders. Coaches and even teammates are leaders. You might lead a small group or large. You might be young or old. You might find you're not a leader at all at this time. That's okay because everyone is still to be in the Word. The Word of God guides, it forgives, it strengthens. It says to be a strong leader focus on Christ. It says if you're a follower, encourage your leaders and pray for them. Then when the time comes for you to be a leader, be a leader for Christ focused on God's promises which are for you and for everyone.