

# Joshua 1

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**Joshua 1:** *Why should you trust God?* It is important to know the answer to this question because not every situation encourages us to trust God. When we get terminally sick. When we lose our job. When we lose someone close to us. Our circumstances change daily. Our confidence must be based on something unchanging.

## Background Information

**Authorship:** Jewish tradition attributes authorship to Joshua (Babylonian Talmud). However, the book was likely written after Joshua's life. First, the book frequently describes altars, monuments, and decrees that lasted "to this day," implying the book was written later (Josh 4:9, 14; 7:26; 8:28–29; 9:27; 10:27; 14:14). Second, the book records Joshua's death (Josh 24:29). Third, the book describes the time after the elders who outlived Joshua (Josh 24:31). On a bigger scale ... the book of Judges seems to be written by the same author.

**Date:** Joshua was written sometime after the the death of the remaining elders of Joshua 24:31. The book was written sometime before David's reign. In 2 Samuel 5:6-10, David drove the Jebusites from Jerusalem. Joshua 15:63 states the Jebusites were still in Jerusalem when the book was written.

**Biblical Context:** In Exodus, God led Israel out of Egypt by Moses's leadership. After stopping by Mt. Sinai, they traveled to Paran, outside of Canaan (Num 12:16). The nation was afraid to fight against the Canaanites (Num 14:1-4), so God forced them to wander in the wilderness for forty years. Everyone over the age of 20 died in the wilderness except Joshua and Caleb (the two faithful spies) (Num 14:28-35). Deuteronomy (Second Law) is addressed to the next generation, those whom Joshua would lead into Canaan. The book of Joshua is the fulfillment of God's promise.

**Theological Context:** The book of Joshua focuses on God's fulfillment of His covenant. The book should be read in contrast with the rebellion at Paran in Numbers 14. The Exodus generation did not enter the land because they lacked faith in God (Heb 3:16-19). The Deuteronomy generation entered because they had faith. Major Theological Themes: God is faithful to His covenant promises. Only those who have faith enjoy a covenant relationship with God.

**Typology:** "Joshua" is the Hebrew equivalent of "Jesus" (Hebrew: יהושע; Greek: Ἰησοῦς). Joshua leading Israel into the promised land and giving the nation rest from the wilderness is a type of Jesus leading God's people into the Kingdom of God and giving them eternal rest (cf. Heb 4:8-10; Matt 11:28; Heb 11:13-16).

## Joshua's Faith

*We should trust in God because He is faithful.* Our circumstances change; but God's faithfulness in unchanging.

## God's Promise (Josh 1:1-5)

*How will Israel conquer the inhabitants of the land?* God will give them the land (Josh 1:2). This is the detail the Exodus generation stumbled over. They doubted God's promises because they trusted only in their own power. The land would not be earned, it would be given. The same is true of our eternal land (heaven) (Heb 10:34; 11:13-16). An eternal dwelling with God cannot be earned, it is a gift of God (Eph 2:8-9).

*What promises did God make to Joshua to give him confidence in leading Israel?* God promised that He would be with Joshua (Josh 1:5). Joshua's confidence should not be grounded in his leadership abilities. His confidence should be grounded in God's faithfulness. Joshua 1:5 is quoted with Psalms 118:6 in Hebrews 13:5-6 "5 Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' 6 So we can confidently say, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?'" Our contentment is in God's presence, not in our circumstances.

### **Joshua's courage (Josh 1:6-9)**

*What command does God repeat to Joshua?* God tells Joshua to be strong and courageous (Josh 1:6, 7, 9). Joshua's courage is never distinct from his trust in God. God's command is not just "be courageous." His command is, "I will be with you; therefore, be strong and courageous" (Josh 1:5, 9). Our courage in difficult circumstances is directly tied to our confidence in God's faithfulness.

"... such as truly believe in the Lord Jesus, and love him in sincerity, endeavouring to walk in all good conscience before him, may in this life be certainly assured that they are in the state of grace, and may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, which hope shall never make them ashamed." — 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith, Chapter 18

*To what does God tell Joshua to remain faithful?* God tells Joshua to remain faithful to Scripture (Josh 1:7-8). It is important that we do not separate faith in God from trust in Scripture. Scripture is God's revelation of Himself. God's nature, as revealed in Scripture, is the basis for our faith. The time we spend in Scripture directly influences our faith in God.

### **Israel's faith**

#### **Joshua's command (Josh 1:10-11)**

*How did Joshua say Israel would take possession of the land?* God would give them the land (Josh 1:11). Joshua told the Exodus generation the same thing. Numbers 14:6-8 "6 And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes 7 and said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, 'The land, which we passed through to spy it out, is an exceedingly good land. 8 If the Lord delights in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey.'" The Exodus generation rebelled because they lacked faith in God.

In the New Covenant, God has promised us eternity in the Kingdom of Heaven. Just like in Joshua, we do not receive this promise by our own efforts or merit. Our citizenship in heaven is a gift from God (Rom 3:24; Eph 2:8).

#### **Covenantal unity (Josh 1:12-15)**

*Why did Joshua give specific instructions to these two and a half tribes?* In Numbers 32, God granted land beyond the Jordan River to these two and a half tribes, with the expectation that they would fight with the nation for the land across the Jordan. Numbers 32:20-22 "20 So Moses said to them, 'If you will do this, if you will take up arms to go before the Lord for the war, 21 and every armed man of you will pass over the Jordan before the Lord, until he has driven out his enemies from before him 22 and the land is subdued before the Lord; then after that you shall return and be free of obligation to the Lord and to Israel, and this land shall be your possession before the Lord.'"

*When does Joshua say they can return to their land?* They can return when God gives their brothers rest and possession of the land (Josh 1:15). Since God called Abraham in Genesis 12, his descendants have lived in tents in Canaan, lived as slaves in Egypt, and lived in tents in the wilderness. They have been oppressed by enemies throughout that time. Receiving the land would be their first time of rest. Hebrews 4 says there is a rest that awaits us in Christ. Jesus said we could have rest by coming to Him. Matthew

11:28 “28 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” We have eternal rest now through faith in Jesus (regardless of circumstance).

### **Israel’s Commitment (Josh 1:16-18)**

*To what did the nation commit?* Israel committed to following Joshua. The Exodus generation made this commitment to Moses (Exod 19:8; cf. Deut 5:27). Both of these are important because God appointed both Moses and Joshua. Their commitment to Joshua is a commitment to God. They even connect their commitment to follow Joshua with God’s presence with him. “May the Lord your God be with you, as he was with Moses” (Josh 1:17).

*What is different about the Exodus generation’s faithfulness to this commitment and the Deuteronomy generation’s faithfulness?* The Exodus generation did not obey once they met opposition; the Deuteronomy generation obeyed. The Exodus generation professed faith, but they did not have faith in God (Heb 3:16-18). The Deuteronomy generation trusted God. Their endurance was evidence of their faith (Heb 10:36-39).

### **Summary**

Your circumstances are largely out of your control. Your circumstances are always changing. *Why should you trust in God?* Joshua 1 teaches that ***We should trust in God because He is faithful.*** Joshua 1 gives us two examples of such trust. First, Joshua trusted God because God promised to be with Him and to give them the land. He trusted God’s faithfulness. Second, the nation committed to follow Joshua because God was with him. They trusted God to give them the land regardless of who the inhabitants were.

Our confidence as Christians does not rest in ourselves or in our circumstances. That is not faith; that is works. Hebrews 10:23 “23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.” Our confidence rests in God. He is faithful.

### **Further Reading**

Numbers 14 (The Exodus generation’s rebellion)

Psalms 95 (Warning to future generations against following the Exodus generation’s example)

Hebrews 3 (The Exodus generation as an example of false profession of faith)

Hebrews 4 (Promise of a future rest and warning to pursue that rest)