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**By Galina Stele**

**I**t was a time of great uncertainty and an overwhelming task for Joshua. Facing the Israelites was the full-flowing Jordan River and Jericho, a large and strong fortress on its western bank. On the eastern side of the river was the beautiful valley Shittim, full of acacia trees and multitudes of God’s people.

It was time to cross the Jordan—just imagine how Joshua felt. Moses was dead. He died at the very moment he was most needed, at the border of the Promised Land! How to cross the Jordan, especially when it was in flood stage (Joshua 3:15)? How to conquer the strong walls and giants of Jericho? The wisdom and experience of Moses was much needed in this crucial period. How would Joshua lead these people to the Promised Land? These people were willing to trade the land of their dreams for a moment of pleasure in the acacia groves. In whom could Joshua trust?

Moses’ death was a great loss for the people of Israel. Nevertheless, they knew that God was still with them. “The pillar of cloud rested over the tabernacle by day, and the pillar of fire by night, an assurance that God would still be their guide and helper if they would walk in the way of His commandments.”1

Joshua waited for the Lord’s directions. Born in slavery, he spent 40 years in Egypt and 40 years being Moses’ right-hand man (Num. 11:28). Originally his name was Hoshea (Num. 13:8), meaning “salvation” or “deliverance.” But sometime during his service to Moses it was changed to “Joshua,” which means “Save, Yahweh!” or “Yahweh saves.”2 The word “Yahweh” pointed to the name of the Lord that had been revealed to Moses in the burning bush: “I am who I am” (Ex. 3:14). Joshua’s name became a living reminder for all that God Himself was the one who saves His people. It would not be Moses, or Joshua, or any other man, but the Eternal One who would lead His people across the Jordan into the Promised Land. Later this very name was given to Jesus. Thus, Joshua was a type of Christ.

**Waiting for God**
Joshua had experienced the power of God many times. He was at Mount Sinai when it was covered with the sparkling cloud and glory of God’s presence. He saw Moses descend the mountain with the law written by God’s hand (Ex. 32:17). He was the one who had fought the Amalekites and won the battle when Moses held up his hands (Ex. 17:8-16). Joshua was among 12 spies sent by Moses to explore the Promised Land—and one of two who believed that God was powerful enough to give them victory over giants.

Joshua “certainly had some, if not most, of the qualities which make a great general—firmness and gentleness, winning ready trust and obedience from his men, decision and rapidity.”3 Joshua did not, however, rely on his talents and qualifications. He had learned from Moses the most important thing: you have to rely fully only on God. “If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here” (Ex. 33:15). That’s why Joshua faithfully waited for the Lord’s instructions.

And God spoke to Joshua. Interestingly, it was not about a strategic plan of conquest, detailed descriptions of maps, or troops needed for the conquest. God started with unexpected guidelines. He directed Joshua’s attention to the thing that would always keep God’s presence with him and make him successful. The Lord said: “Be strong and very courageous. 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. Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; 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” (Joshua 1:7, 8). The success of Joshua as a leader—and the people of Israel as a nation—would depend on their obedience to the law of God, to His Word. Only then, after this introduction, did God begin to give Joshua some particular instructions on how to move forward.

**Lessons for the Promised Land**
As world history rushes to its end we are standing again as a church at the border of the Promised Land. Sometimes we forget this, especially when the valleys of acacias are in blossom. And as individuals we often face our own Jerichos. What lessons can we draw from this story and the instructions given by God in Joshua 1:7, 8? What questions should we be asking ourselves?

1. *Questions about God’s presence*: Do we share Joshua’s conviction that there is no use in going forward if the Lord’s presence is not going with us? Do we recognize that His presence is in His Word?

2. *Questions about courage*: Are we as daring as God wants us to be? Will we show the courage it takes to follow Him and be faithful to His Word, no matter what? Did the people of Israel look silly in the eyes of others when they had been walking around Jericho seven days? Such courage will be much needed again at the border of the Promised Land.

3. *Questions about success*. Doesn’t everybody want to be successful? What does this story reveal that is the secret of success? Often we desire to witness God’s direct intervention. We want to see the water of our Jordan divided, and we are surprised by God’s apparent silence. But do we follow God’s instructions that have been already revealed to us? Or are we waiting for something new?

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| **Questions for Reflection and Sharing** **1.** When do you delve into the Bible? Mornings, or evenings, or both? At lunchtime? Think about how you can develop the habit of nourishing yourself regularly with the Word of God.**2.** Joshua had great faith in God--and wasn't afraid to share this with others. How can you share your faith in practical ways?  |

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4. *Questions about immersion into the Word of God*: How deeply do we plunge ourselves into the Word of God? What kind of methods are we using to fill our mind with the Scriptures?

5. *Questions about “everything written in it.”* How faithfully shall we follow? If we follow just a part of God’s instructions, it “shows respect for certain parts of the law only, but not for the Lawgiver.”4 Are we willing to obey faithfully everything that is revealed in the Bible?

**Revived and Ready to Cross**
The book of Joshua tells us that the promise of God was fulfilled in Joshua’s life. He was faithful, and God exalted him. He led God’s people across the Jordan. Jericho’s walls fell down. The people of Canaan were full of awe and fear. The Lord’s presence was with them, and the Promised Land was given to the people of Israel.

Joshua let God be his general. He did not look for his personal glory. He wanted to build an altar to God in people’s hearts and minds, passing the Word of God to new generations. “There was not a word of all that Moses had commanded that Joshua did not read to the whole assembly of Israel, including the women and children, and the foreigners who lived among them” (Joshua 8:35). Joshua chose to serve the Lord until his last breath. At the end of his life he testified that God was faithful, that His promises were not mirages. He said, “Every promise has been fulfilled; not one has failed” (Joshua 23:14). God relied on Joshua because Joshua relied on his Lord.

I want to be like Joshua. I know that my point of destination is the Promised Land, not the valleys on this side of the Jordan River. But how should I cross the Jordan? My enemy is cunning and cruel, and my wisdom is limited.

The presence of the Lord is promised to me in the Scriptures. God desires to dwell within me by His Word. He wants to revive, inform, and transform me through it. Because of this I will be able to go forward and cross the Jordan. I am willing to do it with Jesus, the Lord who saves.

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1 Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1890), p. 481.
2 Donald H. Madvig, “Joshua,” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1992), vol. 3, p. 257.
3 A. Plummer, “Introduction to the Historical Books: Joshua to Nehemiah,” *Joshua, The Pulpit Commentary* (Peabody, Miss.: Hendrickson Publishers), vol. 3, p. iv.
4 Madvig, p. 257.

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