

BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS

Devotional Thoughts on Leading Men on Their Spiritual Journey

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Preface

But I'm not a leader. Is this for me?

If you define leadership in terms of a spiritual gift (Romans 12: 8 or 1 Corinthians 12:28) or a position you may be right. However, Jesus told His disciples to make disciples (Matthew 28:18-20). The Great Commission calls us to **lead** men to the throne of grace and then into a deeper life in Christ. I do not have the gift of evangelism, yet I am called to evangelize. When we come to Christ, He calls us to **lead** in one way or another.

The purpose of men's ministry is to encourage spiritual growth and the application of spiritual principles in marriage, family, work, church ministry, and service at home or abroad. Ministry to men is about changing lives.

Our responsibility is to guide men in their spiritual journey. There are a set of Biblical qualities that we need to have in our toolkit. The purpose of these devotional thoughts is to define the qualities and characteristics found in Joshua chapter one as Joshua and Israel's leaders gear up for the challenge of entering the Promised Land.

Introduction

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:3).

The first chapter of Joshua consists of four conversations:

1. The Lord directing Joshua
2. Joshua directing his officers
3. Joshua directing the Reubenites, Gadites, and half tribe of Manasseh
4. The Reubenites, Gadites and half tribe of Manasseh responding to Joshua

These dialogs provide twenty practical guidelines for leading men. These same qualities are threaded throughout scripture. We see them in the lives of the patriarchs, prophets, kings, apostles, and other leaders. We also see the consequences when they are ignored. As such, the Lord considers them to be very important to advancing His kingdom through men.

We need to build these qualities into our thoughts and actions. However, if we attempt this without the Holy Spirit, the result will be shallow, fragile and mechanical. When the Holy Spirit forms these qualities in us, they are deep, durable and flow naturally.

All references are to Joshua chapter 1 unless otherwise indicated. Scriptures are taken from the New International Version unless otherwise indicated.

In April 2001, a group of men met at the C&MA National Office to discuss the future of men’s ministry in the Alliance. Before the team began discussion, they attended the regular Friday morning chapel service. The speaker was Pastor Dave Beidel, of New Hope Community Church, Staten Island, NY. He shared an experience that led him to understand that nothing else mattered except seeking a closer walk with the Lord. When the team convened , there was agreement that the focus of men’s ministry needed to be leading our men to a more serious, dynamic and personal relationship with Christ.

- **Looking In:** To what degree have you submitted to the Lord? What is more important, doing work for the Lord or drawing closer to the Lord?
- **Looking Out:** Are you leading men to a deeper relationship with Christ?

“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” Submit yourselves, then to God. Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and He will come near to you. (James 4:6-8)

Seek God, not the experience.

Background

The Rescue

*But the Israelites went through the sea on dry ground, with a wall of water on their right and on their left. **That day the Lord saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore.** (Exodus 14:29-30)*

The Lord led the children of Israel out of captivity and across the Red Sea. He protected them from Pharaoh's pursuing army and delivered them from certain death. He **saved** them.

It was God's intention that the Israelites then proceed from the Red Sea into the Promised Land. If the Red Sea represents **salvation**, then entering the Promised Land represents **sanctification**.

Conquering the Promised Land was a discipling process. It involved obedience, persistence, boldness, and, most importantly, dependence on God. For us, it involves experiencing the power of God in overcoming obstacles to spiritual growth, being equipped for ministry, and living an empowered life.

Many men in our society are "dead men walking." We must build relationships with those men and lead them to Christ and to the abundant life. As men who enjoy a life of hope and peace, we are called to make disciples.

- **Looking In:** Have you crossed the Red Sea in your spiritual journey? Have you prepared a testimony about that crossing? Do you emphasize the before and after differences?
- **Looking Out:** Do you know men who have not crossed the Red Sea? Do you pray for them? Are you building relationships with them?

In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!" Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit." (John 3:3-6)

One of the ways Christ calls on us to suffer is to carry in our souls the pain of a dying world. Peter Nanfelt

The Preparation

The LORD spoke to Moses in the Tent of Meeting in the Desert of Sinai on the first day of the second month of the second year after the Israelites came out of Egypt. (Numbers 1:1)

The Lord guided Israel out of Egypt with the cloud by day and fire by night. He delivered them from Egypt (the world). Then the Lord began to affirm their identity as a people set apart. He gave them the Law and established the Levites as priests. He had them construct the Tabernacle and He established His presence in their midst. He provided them food, water and direction. They were dependent on Him for provisions and guidance. (Exodus 16 through Numbers 13)

As with Israel, new believers need to know that they are set apart. They need to understand that the Christian life is one of dependence on the Lord and that the Lord wants to be the center of their lives. New believers need to be disciplined. They need to be led to know the value of and how to use the Word, who God is, the problem of sin, Jesus' role as savior, the meaning of salvation, the new life in Christ, the role of the church, and their mission as a disciple.

- **Looking In:** Do you understand what it means to be a believer? Do you know how to lead someone through the Word and help them understand what it means to be a Christian?
- **Looking Out:** Are you engaged in pursuing the Great Commission? Are you engaged in making disciples?

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." (Luke 24:45-49)

We are not created to fit in. We are created to stand out. Dan Erickson

The Rebellion

*That night all the people of the community raised their voices and wept aloud. All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole assembly said to them, "If only we had died in Egypt! Or in this desert! Why is the LORD bringing us to this land only to let us fall by the sword? Our wives and children will be taken as plunder. Wouldn't it be better for us to go back to Egypt?" And they said to each other, "**We should choose a leader and go back to Egypt.**" (Numbers 14:1-4)*

In the journey to the Promised Land, The Israelites took a detour, a detour between salvation and sanctification. The Lord, by a powerful display of his authority over nature and man, delivered Israel from Pharaoh and Egypt. In spite of that display of power and their dependence upon God over the preceding two years, they saw the way ahead leading to death and captivity. The children of Israel did not believe that God would or could overcome the obstacles reported by the ten spies. They saw the challenge through human eyes. The risk was too great. The challenges were monumental. "We cannot do it!" This was a failure of faith. Consequently, they wandered in the desert for the next forty years; it was forty years of anguish and frustration. The people were without rest. The Promised Land was just that, a promise, not a reality. Once the faithless generation had passed away, God was ready to try again. Only when disbelief was dead could Israel subdue the Promised Land.

Ministry to men involves leading them to the throne of grace and encouraging them, and in all cases, exhorting them to establish a dynamic connection with the Lord. It means moving them to salvation and then onto sanctification.

- **Looking In:** Are you restless in your spiritual journey? Are you still searching? Have you made the transition from salvation to the abundant life or are you still wandering in the desert?
- **Looking Out:** Do you know believers who do not experience the abundant life: men who are restless in their spiritual journey? Is your ministry designed to take men from the desert to the Promised Land? Have you established relationships where you can lead men from the desert into the Promised Land.

Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith. Now we who have believed enter that rest, ... (Hebrews 4:1-3)

The wilderness is a time of restoration. It is death to the past.

Joshua One: Be Strong and Courageous

Be Connected

*After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, **the LORD said** to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide: ... (Joshua 1:1).*

The old citizen's band (CB) radio jargon was, "Do you have your ears on." The above verse tells us that Joshua had his "ears on." He was connected to the Lord. He was open to what the Lord was saying. Joshua had the kind of a relationship with the Lord that enabled him to hear God when He spoke. It was not a matter of having to go find God. He was there. *Jehovah Shammah* – Jehovah is there. At other times in the Book of Joshua, Joshua sought the Lord (Joshua 5:13-16); but in this case, the Lord spoke and Joshua heard.

Remember God spoke to Samuel as a child. Samuel did not have the connection that Joshua had and he needed clarification as to who was calling him.

God speaks to us every second of every day. Becoming a disciple means, like Samuel, learning to hear God's voice. This is a continuing process because we live in a very noisy world. Discerning what is from the Lord and what is not is a challenge. Joshua knew the voice of the Lord.

Looking In: Do you have such a relationship with the Lord that you know that He is present? Do you hear Him when He speaks to you? Do you seek Him on a daily basis for guidance, encouragement, affirmation and accountability? Is your channel to the Lord always open? If not, what is interfering? What can you do to restore or improve communications?

Looking Out: Do you know men who are not connected to God or men who are wandering in the wilderness? Are you connecting and building relationships with them? Are you praying for them consistently? Are you encouraging them in their walk?

Pray without ceasing. (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

The mark of a warrior for the Lord: calluses on the knees!

Be Ready

*“Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, **get ready** to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites.(Joshua 1:2)*

This is a change of command. Moses was gone. The Lord placed the mantel of leadership upon Joshua. He commanded Joshua to get the people ready to cross the Jordan and enter the Promised Land. Israel is under new leadership and the new leader was given a mission.

We encounter changes in leadership in our lives. With new leadership comes new vision and energy. In this case continuing the task the Lord gave Moses. Within the church, the leadership may change but the task remains the same: advance Christ’s kingdom.

- **Looking In:** Has the Lord placed you under new leadership? Are you ready to move out under that leadership? Are you hesitating or drawing back at new direction? Are you being called out of your comfort zone?
- **Looking Out:** Has the Lord given you a ministry, a ministry to an individual or to a group? Have you accepted that responsibility? Are you aware that success will come from the Lord?

Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men. (Titus 3:1-2)

It ought to be the business of everyday to prepare for our last day. Matthew Henry.

Be a Man of Vision

*I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. **Your territory will extend** from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates—all the Hittite country—to the Great Sea on the west. No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.*
(Joshua 1:3-5)

The Lord's First Promise: The Lord laid out a grand vision for Israel. From a geographical perspective, it must have been beyond their comprehension. They were to seize a vast territory from those who occupied it.

We have received the peace of salvation and enjoy contentment and understanding in pursuing God's call on our lives. We need to grasp the vision of reaching every man in our sphere of influence. We need to understand that the task ahead is beyond our abilities. It is God-sized. Ministering to men is tough. The battle involves snatching men from the grasp of Satan. We need to be overwhelmed. We need to have a clear picture of where the Lord is leading us and the scope of the battle ahead.

Looking In: What challenging vision has the Lord given you? What are the battles you face? What/Who are the enemies you face? Do you understand the scope of the battle?

Looking Out: What battles are the men around you facing? Do they know the enemies they face? Are you giving them a vision of what it means to enter the Promised Land?

He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? (Romans 8:32)

Where there is no expectation, there is no faith. A.W. Tozer

Be a Man of Faith

No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. (Joshua 1:5)

The Lord's Second Promise: After casting the vision for the Israelites, God promised that He would be there for them. Do we fully understand that the Lord will be with us or do we feel we should fight the battle alone? The Lord says: *"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."* (Joshua 1:9) If that is not enough, Jesus told his disciples, *"... I am with you always, to the very end of the age."* (Matt hew 28:20b) Bottom line: You shall overcome! (Romans 8:37) It is said that the task ahead of us is never greater than the power behind us. Why does God have to keep reminding us that He will not leave or go away from us? *"I will never leave you nor forsake you (reject or turn away)".* (Deuteronomy 31:6, 8), and again: *"Am I not the God who is close by?"* (Jeremiah 23:23)

Looking In: What obstacle do you face in your personal spiritual journey? Do you believe that the Lord is with you? Do you have faith to overcome?

Looking Out: What obstacle do you face in ministering to men? Do you believe that the Lord is with you? Do you have faith that you will overcome?

Yet he (Abraham) did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. (Romans 4:20-21)

Faith is not believing that God can. It is knowing that God will. Ben Stein

Be Strong and Courageous

“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” (Joshua 1:7).

The Lord’s first command is to be strong and courageous. This phrase is repeated three more times in this chapter (v8, 9 and 18). Some speculate that Joshua needed this encouragement because he was now the leader of Israel. He was filling Moses’ shoes. On the other hand, the Lord knew the challenges that lay ahead: challenges that Joshua and the Israelites would face. It takes strength and courage to go into battle as the underdog, when the odds are overwhelmingly in favor of the enemy. No matter how mature we may be in our walk with the Lord, the next task He gives us will be God sized. That is why the Lord is always at our side. He will take us through the battle. In sports psychology the focus is on one’s mental state with emphasis, on self-confidence. In matters of the spirit, the focus is on confidence in the Lord. We are to be strong and courageous in the Lord. We will be victorious because we are in Him.

- **Looking In:** What are you afraid of? What internal spiritual battles do you face? What new ministry task has the Lord given you? Are these challenges beyond your capability? Are you approaching these challenges in Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit? Are you able to stand with the psalmist when he said: *“The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to him in song.”* (Psalm 27:7). Do you know, at the experience level, that the Lord would not have asked you if it was not something He wanted done and will empower you to do?
- **Looking Out:** Are you aware of men who need to be reminded that the Lord is on their side? Do you need to come along side of them and encourage them to be strong and courageous?

Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ. He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. (2 Corinthians 1:21-22)

You can tell how big a man is by what it takes to discourage him.

Be Obedient

*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. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; **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 Lord's second command is to be obedient. It is the key to success. God's instructions focus on the heart (spiritual preparation) and not on swords and shields. So it is in leading men. Obedience is more important than strategies and tactics. Disobedience undermines our ministry to those who follow us. Consider the impact of Achan's disobedience: thirty-six men were killed and the army was routed (Joshua 7:1-5). The Lord connects obedience with success when he reminds Joshua that: "... *the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.*" (Joshua 1:9) The history of Israel is one of moving between obedience and disobedience and, therefore, victory and defeat. Disobedience invites conflict, creates barriers and limits the application of God's power.

- **Looking In:** Are you aware of the connection between the task that the Lord has given you and your obedience? Are you encountering an issue with obedience? Is it behavior? Is it thoughts and attitudes? What are you doing about it? Are you depending on the Lord in restoring obedience? The command is "go!" The promise is "I will be with you."
- **Looking Out:** Are you aware of someone who is having problems with obedience? Are you building a relationship with him? Are you building trust and encouraging him to be obedient? Is your relationship ready for accountability?

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."
(Matthew 28:19-20)

Only the believer is obedient – Only the obedient believe. Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Challenge

Be Proactive

So Joshua ordered the officers of the people: “Go through the camp and tell the people, ‘Get your supplies ready. Three days from now you will cross the Jordan here to go in and take possession of the land the LORD your God is giving you for your own.’” (Joshua 1:10)

Joshua, through his officers, instructed the people to get ready. Joshua had the blessing of the Lord. He moved forward with confidence. He did not have a clue about how Israel would cross into the Promised Land or how they would subdue the occupants.

So it is with us. The Lord gives us a task. He expects us to move out smartly. He expects us to be proactive in pursuing that task. We should not hesitate because of uncertainty over the details in execution. Often the Lord does not reveal the how until we act on the task. The priests had to step into the water before the Lord stopped the flow of the Jordan River.

- **Looking In:** What is the ministry the Lord has given you? Are you proactive in overcoming the challenges in your life? Do you believe that the Lord will give you victory in that ministry – even though you are uncertain about how to proceed? Do you understand, at the action level, that He will be with you? What are you waiting for?
- **Looking Out:** Are you aware of issues in the lives of the men around you that hold them back? Are you encouraging them in decision making and action?

Therefore, go ... (Matthew 28:19) and, But you will receive power ... (Acts 1:8)

Are you looking for a blessing or an opportunity to bless.

Be Ready

So Joshua ordered the officers of the people: "Go through the camp and tell the people, 'Get your supplies ready. Three days from now you will cross the Jordan here to go in and take possession of the land the LORD your God is giving you for your own.'" (Joshua 1:10-11)

Then he turned his attention to the Reubenites, Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh. They were to lead Israel into the Promised Land. He selected those who were to lead. One of the great themes of scripture is "be ready." (For example: Exodus 12:11, Jeremiah 1:17, Matthew 25:10, Titus 3:1.) In this case, there is a deadline – three days. In other cases there is uncertainty over when the anticipated event will occur. Because of uncertainty, the issue is about getting ready. Being ready is a process. Our world is changing. Our culture is changing. Our environment is changing. Being ready yesterday does not necessarily mean that we are ready today. The manna was only good for one day. The Lord leads us one day at a time.

Getting supplies ready for spiritual battle involves knowing the Word, understanding the Word, and being able to apply the Word. To be ready for spiritual battle one must spend time in prayer. It means actively listening to God. Getting ready for spiritual battle must be intentional just as it was for Israel.

Looking In: Are you ready for the task the Lord has given you? Have you made preparations for what the Lord is going to do? Are your lamps filled? (Matt 25:10)

Looking Out: Are you helping others prepare for what lies ahead?

So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. (Matthew 24:44)

Only those who see the invisible can do the impossible. Bill Gothard

Be Accountable

But to the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joshua said, “Remember the command that Moses the servant of the LORD gave you: ‘The LORD your God is giving you rest and has granted you this land.’ (Joshua 1:12-13)

Joshua reminded the Reubenites, Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh of the commitment they made to Moses when he gave them the lands east of the Jordan River. The Lord expects those faithful to him to follow through on their commitment. Follow through means obedience. Obedience means submission. We need to be reminded that submission is a moment by moment mindset. With God-given rest comes responsibility. Jesus reminded Peter that he was accountable to feed His sheep. (John 21:15-17) Joshua held the Reubenites, Gadites and half tribe of Manasseh accountable to their promise. He reminded them.

Disciplemaking is the process of moving men from turmoil to peace and from peace to contentment (rest). First, the peace that comes through salvation and then the contentment that comes with making Jesus Christ the Lord of their lives. Those who are being given rest must assist men who have yet to receive rest. Men tend to live compartmented lives. We need to lead men to spiritual maturity. The Lord is saying, “When you make me Lord of your life, I will give you rest.” And with rest comes accountability. That accountability involves modeling personal growth and leading others to rest. We are accountable to the Lord – and to the men we serve.

- **Looking In:** What is God calling you to do? Are you in an accountability relationship? As a matter of spiritual discipline, do you review accountability questions regularly? Is your walk with God such that He alerts you to sin? “The closer to Christ we are, the more aware we are of our sin.” (Ted Roberts)
- **Looking Out:** Are you encouraging your men to be in an accountability relationship?

Brothers, each man, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation God called him to. (1 Corinthians 7:24)

Those to whom God is giving rest He holds accountable

What role does remembering play?

Be at Rest in the Lord

*But to the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joshua said, “Remember the command that Moses the servant of the LORD gave you: ‘The LORD your God is giving you rest and has granted you this land.’ Your wives, your children and your livestock may stay in the land that Moses gave you east of the Jordan, but all your fighting men, fully armed, must cross over ahead of your brothers. You are to help your brothers **until the LORD gives them rest**, as he has done for you, and until they too have taken possession of the land that the LORD your God is giving them.” (Joshua 1:12-15)*

Twice during this dialog Joshua uses the word rest. He describes the state of the eastern tribes as being given rest because they possessed their allotted land. Then he describes the future state of those who were yet to enter the Promised Land. Joshua tells them to stay with their brothers until they were given rest.

Rest is a common theme in the Bible. It is defined as a state of inner peace or security. The Hebrew word for rest is *noah*. It means the guaranteed continuance of hope and the assurance of being with the Lord in eternity. *Noah* is an instrument of deliverance; a place or position in which to settle down, a home. It means rest and salvation.¹ Rest is knowing the presence of the Lord. It is, however, the Lord who gives rest. It is not something we achieve on our own (Joshua 1:15). Note that the giving of rest is a continuing process, not a one-time event. *The fear of the Lord brings life. Then one rests content, untouched by trouble.* (Proverbs 19:23)

The eastern tribes were being given rest. Therefore, the dialog between Joshua and these men provides insight into the qualities of those who lead their brothers into rest or the Promised Land.

- **Looking In:** Is the Lord giving you rest? Have you entered the Promised Land and dealt with the “occupants.” With the Lord’s help, are you driving them out?
- **Looking Out:** Do you know men who are not being given rest? What are their names? Are you leading them into their Promised Land?

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:29-30)

God is giving rest to those who enter the Promised Land.

¹ (Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament #1323, Vol II, pg 562-3)

Be Guides

*Your wives, your children and your livestock may stay in the land that Moses gave you east of the Jordan, but all your fighting men, fully armed, must **cross over ahead of your brothers**. You are to help your brothers. (Joshua 1:14)*

Joshua instructed the Reubenites, Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh to lead Israel across the Jordan and into the Promised Land.

In crossing the Jordan, the army would be engaging the enemy. Since these tribes knew what it meant to be receiving rest, Joshua placed them on point, the most vulnerable position. They were to take the risk of being in front.

As leaders of men we are called to be on point. We need to lead the platoon, the company, or the battalion. We are to show the way. As a result we are visible and risk taking fire. By being in front, leaders of men protect those who follow and may not be mature enough to understand attacks and how to respond to them. Moreover, those in front frequently draw fire from opponents. We need to be intentional in our efforts to bring men before the throne of grace and encourage them to be stalwart soldiers. We must mentor our men and model behavior that invites others to join the adventure.

You are entering unknown territory. (Joshua 3:4) Guiding is not a matter of knowing where you are going but knowing that God is leading the way and will be giving rest to those who follow.

- **Looking In:** Who is leading you? Who is mentoring and encouraging you?
- **Looking Out:** Who are you leading into rest? Who in your sphere of influence has yet to enter the Promised Land? Leading a men's ministry is about individuals, not an organization.

Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will (2 Timothy 2:25-26).

Those to whom God is giving rest He commands to lead.

Be Team Players

... *but all your fighting men, fully armed, must cross over ahead of your brothers.*
You are to help your brothers (Joshua 1:14)

Joshua directed the Reubenites, Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh to join and work with the other tribes of Israel, encouraging them in subduing the Promised Land. Joshua directed the fighting men to help the Israelites conquer the Promised Land.

Everyone together: those with the inheritance and those yet to receive it. They were to share the burden. Those to whom God is giving rest he expects to wage war alongside those yet to receive rest. The conquest must be undertaken by all Israel. The command was to “help your brothers.”

It takes a team. We are not all wired the same way. We are called to different roles and the Holy Spirit gifts us for those roles. “Different strokes for different folks.” In the course of ministering to men, we are called to connect, encourage and exhort. It is not necessary that all these functions be performed by the same man. We are to live the call together. We must grow in the Lord together. For some reason, many men think they can fight the battles of life alone. Men do not ask for directions, right? The role of those who are being given rest is to help their brothers who have yet to receive rest. The battles of life are never intended to be fought in isolation. We need each other. Ministering to men requires teamwork: teamwork in leadership, teamwork in outreach and evangelism, and teamwork in discipling.

- **Looking In:** What is your role? What is your calling? Are you a coach, a quarterback, a defensive end, a wide receiver, or What is your grace gift? (Romans 12:6-8) What are your body gifts? (1 Corinthians 12:28-31)
- **Looking Out:** Who is on your team? What are their spiritual gifts? What are the misunderstandings that arise from the application of grace gifts? Are you aware of the enemy’s attacks on your men? Are you teaming against those attacks in prayer, encouragement, and perhaps even exhortation?

From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. (Ephesians 4:16)

Those to whom God is giving rest He commands to be a part of the team.

Be Persistent.

“... until the LORD gives them rest, as he has done for you, and until they too have taken possession of the land that the LORD your God is giving them. After that, you may go back and occupy your own land, which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you east of the Jordan toward the sunrise.” (Joshua 1:15)

Joshua told the Reubenites, Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh that they needed to stay until the job is done.

The job is tough. It is challenging. There will always be a temptation to give up – to move on to something easier. Joshua urges the eastern tribes to keep at it until the land has been conquered.

Never give up. Keep on keeping on. The task of encouraging men to move from where they are to where the Lord wants them is difficult, particularly when our men resist moving out of their comfort zones. Men’s ministry is like herding cats. It is draining, exhausting and discouraging. The battle for the souls of men is spiritual warfare. The enemy throws up barriers, distractions, diversions and setbacks to keep men from realizing their potential and God’s plan for them.

The Lord indicates that there may be times when we need to “shake the dust from our shoes” and move on. (Matthew 10:14) When do we do that? When we get frustrated? When we just cannot stand it anymore? What if we are approaching the tipping point? Only the Lord can tell us when it is time to change our focus and redirect our energy. The battle is the Lord’s. *Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.* (Gal 6:9) If we grow weary we have made it *our* battle, used *our* energy, and applied *our* wisdom and will. We have not relied on the Lord. The Lord directs us to keep at it until the land has been subdued. Retirement is not an option. The good news is that the Lord will sustain us.

- **Looking In:** In your spiritual journey, Where is the Lord asking you to focus? What attitudes and behavior in your life do not glorify the Lord? Where is He asking you to clean up your act? Have you submitted these attitudes and behaviors to the Lord? Are you empowered by the Holy Spirit?
- **Looking Out:** Are you discouraged and frustrated in your ministry? Are you at your wits end? Do you want to give up? Are you thinking about retiring? Are you growing weary in doing good? Are you ministering from your own wisdom and strength? Are you empowered by the Holy Spirit?

To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. (Romans 2:7)

Those to whom God is giving rest He commands to be persistent

Commitment

Be Willing

*Then they answered Joshua, “**Whatever you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go.**” (Joshua 1:16)*

The Reubenites, Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh gave Joshua a positive response. They said, “We will!”

They were willing to be a part of the conquest of the land promised to the other tribes. They were willing to set aside their own plans and goals for the good of all Israel, for the good of those who had yet to be given rest. They were willing to set aside safety and security for battle. In spite of the challenges that lay ahead, they were willing to step out of their comfort zone. They said, “yes!” to the battle.

Ministry to men is a tug of war between doing what is easy and doing what is needed. We often set priorities on the basis of risk rather than value. We avoid those things we do not feel equipped or capable of handling. Ministry to men involves building connections with men – frequently outside of our comfort zone. It involves encouraging men to become disciples – the excuses are many (“I don’t have time,” or “My schedule is full.”). We need to encourage men to serve, minister and support the body – leading them to hear God’s call.

- **Looking In:** Do you understand the task to which God is calling you? Are you holding back because you do not understand how your skills, gifts, and talents fit into that calling? Have you submitted to His will? Are you willing to engage in the battle? The Lord wants to do great things and He is providing you the Holy Spirit to achieve them.
- **Looking Out:** Are you encouraging your men to listen to God’s call on their lives? Are you urging them to move out of their comfort zone into the battle?

Now finish the work, so that your eager willingness to do it may be matched by your completion of it, according to your means. For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have. (2 Corinthians 8:11-12.

Those to whom God is giving rest need to be willing.

Be Obedient

*Just as we fully obeyed Moses, so **we will obey you.** (Joshua 1:17)*

Not only were the Reubenites, Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh willing to follow orders, they made a commitment to follow Joshua. Moses was gone. Therefore, they would follow Joshua. Obedience is a significant theme in scripture. The word “obey” appears nearly 150 times in the Bible. Obedience is the key to freedom and success. Disobedience brings captivity and defeat.

The eastern tribes must have thought it through. They will go to the battlefield once again. They had spent 40 years in the wilderness following Moses. They fought against Ammon and Bashan and subdued the land east of the Jordan. (Numbers 32) Now the time had come to conquer the land west of the Jordan under Joshua’s leadership.

When we made Jesus the Lord of our lives, He asked us to set aside things that are important to us in favor of things that are important to Him. It is one thing to be willing and something else to be obedient. Obedience is putting your body and soul where your mouth and mind are. Willingness is a mental state. Obedience is a state of action.

- **Looking In:** Have you made a personal commitment to follow your spiritual leader? Are you responding to his leadership? Is there a disconnect between willingness and obedience in your life?
- **Looking Out:** Are you modeling obedience in your sphere of influence? Do your men understand what it means to be obedient? Are you encouraging one another to be obedient?

Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, men will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. (2 Corinthians 9:13)

Those to whom God is giving rest are to be obedient.

Be an Encourager

*“... **Only may the LORD your God be with you as he was with Moses.** Whoever rebels against your word and does not obey your words, ... **Only be strong and courageous!**” (Joshua 1:17-18)*

The Reubenites, Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh gave Joshua encouragement.

The men of the eastern tribes encouraged Joshua with a commitment to obey. They capped their response by reminding Joshua that he was operating under God’s agenda, authority, direction and presence.

Those to whom God is giving rest he expects to be encouragers of those who have yet to receive rest. There are two forms of encouragement: words and action. Action involves working with and walking along side a brother.

In ministering to men, we face obstacles, barriers and challenges. We face the forces of darkness. Satan will actively interfere with spiritual growth. Men need to be encouraged in their walk. As leaders of men, we need to say “Be strong and courageous.” We need to convey the message in both words and actions. Be transparent. Let men know that you have faced or are facing challenges. Men are encouraged when they know that others have been there or are facing challenges in their own lives.

- **Looking Out:** Are you an encourager? Who around you needs a word of encouragement? What about your pastor or other leaders in the church? They can always use a word of encouragement. Are you using the fact that you do not have the gift of encouragement as an excuse? Have you chosen to be an encourager?

¹³But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness. ... ²³Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. ²⁵Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 3:13; 10:23-25)

Those to whom God is giving rest He calls to be encouragers.

Be On Guard

Whoever rebels against your word and does not obey your words, whatever you may command them, will be put to death. (Joshua 1:18)

There will always be those who revolt when the going gets tough. The Reubenites, Gadites, and the half tribe of Manasseh were experienced enough to know that rebellion was serious and had to be eliminated or it would undermine the effectiveness of the army. Rebels must be eliminated.

Scripture warns us to be on guard. Watchmen feature prominently in the Word. Watchmen were posted on the hills overlooking the battlefield. They were posted on the walls of the city to alert the people when an attack was eminent. Watchmen were posted in vineyards when the fruit was ripe and ready to be harvested. They guarded against those who came at night to steal the fruit.

Have you seen churches disintegrate or split because men rise up against their pastor or the leadership team or fail to stand firm when leaders are under attack? The Devil is the divider. God unities. As leaders we need to have discernment. We need to not only know when a man or men are rebelling against the leadership or direction of the church, we need to take action to remove those who are poisoning the atmosphere or are barriers to progress.

- **Looking In:** Do you spend time in the Word? Do you measure your own attitudes and behavior against scripture? Are you allowing the Holy Spirit to keep you in check?
- **Looking Out:** Do you have the courage to act, to follow through when you are aware of divisive attitudes and behavior? Are you willing to stand up and commit to your leaders that you will not accept those who undermine and oppose the way the Lord is leading the body? Are you a watchman?

Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! (Acts 20:30-31)

Those to whom God is giving rest must guard the truth.

Prolog to the Battle

Chain of Command

... the LORD said to Joshua son of Nun, (Joshua 1:1) ... So Joshua ordered the officers of the people: ... (Joshua 1:10) ... But to the Reubenites, the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joshua said, ... (Joshua 1:12)

When going into battle, there is a natural, scriptural order. When there is a breakdown in that order, disaster follows. Joshua chapter one begins with the Lord giving Joshua instructions. He, in turn, directs the officers and then the men of the eastern tribes.

Every man stands somewhere in this order. One is called to cast God's vision to those who will lead the advance. Others are called to be on the front line of the battle. Still others are called to support the advance. We have a God-given role to play, a calling.

We are called to lead. We are called to lead under the direction of Jesus Christ. We are to lead in our homes. We are to be spiritual leaders to those less mature in the faith.

At the same time we are subordinates to the Lord and the spiritual leader(s) He has placed over us.

- **Looking In:** Is the Lord your commander-in-chief? Are you being mentored? Who is mentoring you?
- **Looking Out:** Are you giving leadership to the man or men the Lord has placed in your charge? Are you preparing another man or men to lead others?

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope, to Timothy my true son in the faith: ... (1 Timothy 1:1-2)

Those to whom God is giving rest need to understand the chain of command.

Be Strong and Courageous (Once Again)

Only be strong and courageous. (Joshua 1:18)

This is the fourth time in 18 verses that the words “be strong and courageous” are spoken. The first three are exhortations from the Lord. In spite of the challenges that lay ahead, the Lord states that He is the one giving the Land to Israel (v2) and “the Lord your God is with you ...” (v9).

Then the men of the eastern tribes told Joshua that they would obey him, follow him willingly, and guard against those who would undermine his authority. They concluded their response with a benediction: “*only be strong and courageous.*”

There are three types of strength: physical, mental and spiritual. Peter speaks of strength in terms of perseverance or steadfastness. (2 Peter 1:6) Our natural response to difficult situations is: “I can’t do it!” or, “That’s impossible!” True, we cannot. We need to rely on the Lord.

God wants us to do the impossible. It is tough to change our attitudes and behavior. It is tough to encourage men to move from where they are to where the Lord wants them. It is a matter of transferring control to the Holy Spirit. The courage we need comes from the Lord. It is not something we generate ourselves.

Joshua was going to lead Israel on a difficult journey. These men did not know exactly where they were going or how they would get there. They understood the broad objective, not the details. Yet, they made a commitment to follow Joshua. In essence, they were saying: “we are with you. Therefore, be strong and courageous!”

As a leader, it is always good to know that there are those behind us who are partners in ministry and offer encouragement.

- **Looking In:** Do you know the objective the Lord has given you? Are you willing to follow even though you do not know the details? Are you moving forward on you own strength? Or, are you depending on the Lord to make a way? Are you aware of the Lord working through you? Are you free to be strong and courageous?
- **Looking Out:** Do you stop to encourage your leaders? Does your leader know that you are there for him? Are you demonstrating willingness in actions as well as words? Do you understand how tough they have it? Do you stand by them? Are you following their lead willingly? Or, do you hold back? If so, why? Do your words and actions say, “be strong and courageous”?

Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong. (1 Corinthians 16:13)

Those whom God is giving rest are to be strong and courageous.

Be a Man of the Book

“... 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 Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; 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 1:6-8)

In these verses, the Lord exhorts Joshua to obey the Word (Law). At the end, Joshua prepares the leaders of Israel for his departure and repeats these words. (Joshua 23:6) These words are book ends in the Joshua narrative.

The Bible contains many more instructions on leadership. These instructions are intended to encourage, enlighten and guide. God’s leaders are men of the Word.

God exhorted Joshua to be a man of the Word. He made it clear that Joshua’s success was dependent on obedience to the Law. *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.* (Psalm 119:105)

- **Looking In:** Are you a man of the Word? How much time have you carved out of your day to connect with the Lord through His Word? What did He say to you from His word today?
- **Looking Out:** Have you shared what God is saying with another man? Are your men, men of the Book? Do they give testimony as to what the Lord is saying to them from His Word? Do you ask them what the Lord is saying to them? Are you setting the expectation that the Lord speaks to them personally from His Word?

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Jesus answered, “It is written ...” (Matthew 4:4)

Those to whom God is giving rest must be men of the Book.