



EXPLORE **THE BIBLE**.

*Adults*

# *Joshua; Judges; Ruth*

Commentary

Summer 2026



# MAKING HISTORY

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History never occurs in a vacuum. Any number of forces move individuals toward action. And those actions shape history. It might be tempting to think people know they are making history in the moment, but, in most cases, that's not how it works.

Sure, we can identify times when historical figures knew they were setting a new standard. America's founding fathers probably had a sense of history in 1776. And Neil Armstrong recognized the importance of "one small step for man" as he touched the moon's surface in 1969.

But those moments are the exceptions, not the rule. For the most part, history only becomes history over time. The books of Joshua, Judges, and Ruth give us a snapshot of Israel's history and the people who helped make it. Moses, the nation's main history maker since it left Egypt, was gone. Now, Israel looked to Joshua to lead them into the promised land.

Later, in their own way, the judges made their mark on history. Meanwhile, an obscure Moabitess named Ruth rewrote the direction of history—for Israel and for every member of the human race. These people were not perfect, but God used them to make a difference because that's what God does.

God has a plan for your life, as well. He wants to use you to change history. But before you can touch the future, you've got to come clean with Him in the present. You do that through a personal relationship with Him through His Son, Jesus. If you've never made the decision to follow Him, you can do it today. Here's all you need to do . . .

- **Admit** to God that you are a sinner. Repent, turning from your sin.
- **By faith receive** Jesus as God's Son and accept His gift of forgiveness from sin. He took the penalty for your sin by dying on the cross. Jesus also rose from the dead, making a new, eternal life possible for us.
- **Confess** your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. You may pray a prayer similar to this as you call on God to save you: "Dear God, I know that You love me. I confess my sin and need of salvation. I turn away from my sin and place my faith in Jesus as my Savior and Lord. In the name of Jesus I pray, amen."

After you have received Jesus Christ into your life, tell a pastor or another Christian about your decision. Show others your faith in Christ by asking for baptism by immersion in your local church as a public expression of your faith.

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\*Evangelistic Emphasis

# MEET THE WRITERS



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# FROM THE TEAM LEADER



## Next Steps

“Moses my servant is dead. Now you and all the people prepare to cross over the Jordan to the land I am giving the Israelites. I have given you every place where the sole of your foot treads, just as I promised Moses” (Josh. 1:2-3).

From the very first verses of the book of Joshua, God communicated His plans for His people. They would (finally!) cross the Jordan River and enter the promised land. A generations-old commitment God made to Abraham would at long last be realized. Joshua would be their new leader. The next steps of their journey were important ones. Courage would be needed. Deep faith in God, the One who had painstakingly led them thus far, was a requirement. Stepping out in faith would be a daily exercise.

As we study the Israelites’ entrance into the promised land and the years that follow, let’s not miss the details. God’s plans for His people and His faithfulness to His promises shouldn’t be overlooked. He would use faithful men and women to accomplish what He had in mind. The Israelites’ faith would be tested. Through it all, God’s character would be on full display.

I hope this quarter’s study brings you a deeper understanding of God’s Word, preparing you for any “next steps” God has for you. May His promises give you daily strength to faithfully follow where He leads.

In Him,  
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*Explore*

*Discover*



# BIBLICAL BACKGROUND

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Joshua, Judges, and Ruth are all historical narratives that provide a bridge from the end of the exodus generation to the beginning of the Davidic monarchy in ancient Israel. Yet they are a special kind of historical narrative that focuses on God's actions rather than human accomplishments alone. The Bible's view of history captures a God who acts in history to fulfill His purposes.

## **JOSHUA**

The book of Joshua spans from the death of Moses until the death of Joshua. It brings the story of the Pentateuch (Gen.–Deut.) to a close. In some respects, Joshua functions as a hinge. It reaches back to the Torah and also presses forward to the prophetic history of Joshua through Kings. It tells the story of how Israel crossed the Jordan River, defeated Jericho and the rest of Canaan, and distributed that land to the twelve tribes. Israel was a new generation in a new land (Josh. 10:40-43; 11:16-20; 12:1-24). Joshua ends with the promise and potential of something new.

One cannot overestimate the importance of the land to ancient Israel (Josh. 1:3-5). The land of Canaan was an essential element of God's promise to Israel's ancestors (Gen. 12:1-3). This was God's land. Proprietorship of the land was central to God's covenant with Moses and Israel. In that covenant, Israel aspired to be God's people living in a land surrounded by foreign cultures.

Joshua can be divided into two parts. Chapters 1–12 describe Israel's conquest of the land. Chapters 13–24 describe the land's allocation to the twelve tribes. Joshua begins and ends with speeches: three speeches in the first chapter and three speeches in the final few chapters. At the beginning of the book, God verbally promised that He would give Israel all the land. At the end of the book, when they renewed the covenant at Shechem, Israel promised they would keep the covenant.

The book of Joshua conveys three main emphases: possession of the land, obedience to the commands of Moses, and driving out the peoples of the land. Underlying these three themes is the concept that the land is God's gift to give. Over and over again, the book declares that God gave the land to Israel.

## **JUDGES**

The book of Joshua concludes by noting that much of land remained unconquered and numerous enemies still lived nearby (Josh. 13:1; 23:4-7). Judges bluntly depicts city after city that stubbornly remained in Canaanite hands. It records Israel's successes and failures, and much of



the promised land remained in foreign hands. Chapter 1 reveals what the rest of the book of Judges illustrates, that things weren't working out too well for Israel under their tribal leadership. Like moths to a flame, Israel was drawn to the allure of the gods and goddesses of Canaan. The end of the book records a sad, moral epitaph, "Everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judg. 21:25, ESV).

The conquest of Canaan was a power struggle at two levels: Israelite tribes and Canaanite peoples battled for control of the land, and Israel's faith in the Lord was tested by the religions of Israel's Canaanite neighbors. Judges is full of fresh starts followed by epic moral failures, which led to oppression from Israel's enemies.

Judges covers the period after the conquest to the Israelite monarchy. As Israel's God Yahweh had granted land and would aid Israel in defending it. But there was a catch. If Israel kept the covenant, they kept the land. If they defied the Lord by abandoning the covenant, then possession of the land was in certain jeopardy. Sin against Yahweh affected the possession of the land. Their biggest threat was themselves.

The book derives its name from the dozen or so individuals in its pages who "judged" Israel. These were not typically judges in the way we think of judges today, but charismatic deliverers who arose out of obscurity to deliver Israel from her enemies. Deborah is one exception who functioned much like a traditional judge (Judg. 4). During this tumultuous time in Israel's early history, the twelve tribes who descended from Jacob/Israel formed a loosely knit coalition based on common ancestry and common faith.

Judges is full of alarming and unsavory narratives; it is not for the faint of heart. It relates a series of cycles. At the beginning of each cycle, Israel failed to keep the covenant by pursuing the religious traditions of her neighbors. Over and over, we read variations of this expression, "Israel did what was evil in the eyes of the LORD." Consequently, a tribe or tribes was oppressed by a foreign power outside or within the borders of Israel. Then, the Lord raised up a deliverer or judge who defeated the enemy of God's people. After that initial victory, there was a period of peace until Israel fell back into religious apostasy, and the cycle of rebellion, oppression, deliverance, and peace repeats again. There are many judges named, but the major judges mentioned are Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson.

The judges early in the book have admirable qualities. But as the book progresses, these judges become more and more offensive. There is a clear downward moral progression throughout the book. Two appendices (chaps. 17–21) largely concentrate on the tribes of Dan and Benjamin, and do not mention judges at all. These closing chapters reveal some of the most despicable acts ever recorded in the Bible—rape, murder, kidnapping, and forced marriage. This horrific closing hints that Israel’s problems would never be solved by their current tribal structure but more importantly by their propensity to indulge in idolatry.

## **RUTH**

The book of Ruth opens by stating that the story is set in the time of the judges. Only four chapters, this beautiful story presents a classic plot about an Israelite woman named Naomi who was forced out of her home in Bethlehem by famine. Her husband and two sons had previously moved with her to Moab where all died, leaving Naomi and her two Moabite daughters-in-law destitute. Ruth decided to return with Naomi to Israel, making her particularly vulnerable as a Moabite in a foreign land. The book describes the elaborate process Boaz, Naomi’s relative, went through to gain the right to marry Ruth. The book of Ruth is a classic tale of tragedy turned to joy. At the end, Naomi is provided for by her relative Boaz, and Boaz has gained a wonderful wife, Ruth.

The book’s ultimate purpose is to show that this marriage led to the lineage of the great King David. Boaz and Ruth’s son, Obed, was the grandfather of King David. The New Testament book of Matthew lists Ruth, a foreign woman, among the lineage of Jesus (Matt. 1:5). Present also in that list is the prostitute Rahab from the book of Joshua (v. 5).

The book of Ruth shows how God can use every ethnicity and even intermarriage with outsiders to work out His plans. God is hardly mentioned in the story itself. That is the story’s brilliance. Like the Joseph story in Genesis, where God never speaks to Joseph directly yet providentially guides Joseph’s every move, the book of Ruth beautifully explores the interplay of God’s purpose and human decision making.

Theologically, these three books demonstrate that God is not some tribal deity who is associated with a particular ethnicity. God is Lord over all the earth. Just as He delivered Israel from Egypt, He gave Israel a land and a moral purpose. Joshua, Judges, and Ruth explore this crucial time of transition, consolidation, and assessment; a new people in a new land.



## Joshua

- **I. Preparation for Possessing the Land** (Josh. 1:1–5:12)
- **II. Victories in the Land** (Josh. 5:13–12:24)
- **III. Allotment of the Land** (Josh. 13:1–21:45)
- **IV. Worship of God in the Land** (Josh. 22:1–24:33)

## Judges

- **I. Prologue** (Judg. 1:1–3:6)
- **II. The Judges** (Judg. 3:7–16:31)
  - 1. Othniel (Judg. 3:7–11)
  - 2. Ehud (Judg. 3:12–30)
  - 3. Shamgar (Judg. 3:31)
  - 4. Deborah and Barak (Judg. 4:1–5:31)
  - 5. Gideon and Abimelech (Judg. 6:1–9:57)
  - 6. Tola and Jair (Judg. 10:1–5)
  - 7. Jephthah (Judg. 10:6–12:7)
  - 8. Ibzan, Elon, and Abdon (Judg. 12:8–15)
  - 9. Samson (Judg. 13:1–16:31)
- **III. Epilogue** (Judg. 17:1–21:25)

## Ruth

- **I. A Family Fleeing** (Ruth 1:1–22)
- **II. A Family Sought** (Ruth 2:1–3:18)
- **III. A Family Redeemed** (Ruth 4:1–22)

# *Strong and Courageous*

JOSHUA'S COURAGE WAS GROUNDED IN THE ASSURANCE  
OF GOD'S TRUSTWORTHINESS.

When I applied for graduate study, I chose about half a dozen universities and seminaries that really interested me. I picked one sure bet that I knew would probably accept me, but then I threw all care to the wind and applied to a handful of highly selective long shots. I was not surprised when kindly-worded letters of rejection began to trickle in. My sure bet arrived as expected, and that seminary graciously invited me to start course work the following fall. But within a few days, I received an acceptance letter from the Graduate School of Religion at Vanderbilt University, one of my long shots. I still remember the specific wording. They had reserved a seat for me in the class that would start in the fall. They had reserved a seat . . . for me!

When I read those words, reality set in. In order to actually claim my seat at the table, I faced several severe decisions. I had to resign from my role as pastor. I had to move my wife and two young children from Wyoming to Nashville, Tennessee, a city I had never even visited. My wife had to quit her job and look for new employment. We also had to sell our house. Academic requirements accompanied these sharp realities. I had to pass Hebrew, Greek, and German proficiency tests immediately upon arrival in Tennessee before I could even begin actual coursework that fall, plus pass a French proficiency exam within the first year of study. And, of course, I had to pass my classes once the term began.

The offer of admission was a wonderful God-given gift. But that gift had to be claimed. To take possession of “my seat” in the classroom, I had to make decisions that required strength and more than a little bit of courage. Plus, there were barriers that I faced and, with God’s grace, overcame.

God promised Joshua a gift, a gift of the promised land. But that gift had to be taken. And that gift was already tenaciously held by others. To take that gift required strength and courage. But the source of that strength and courage was not because of Joshua’s own abilities, but in the promise and faithfulness of God.

## Joshua 1:1-18

The book of Deuteronomy is the last book of the Torah, and the book of Joshua follows right on its heels. Joshua is a distinct book in its own right, but it is also part of a continuing story that starts in the book of Genesis. In Genesis, God promised Abraham four exciting realities: a land, a name, descendants, and a blessing. When God made that promise, Abraham possessed none of these realities. Surprisingly, Deuteronomy ends with these promises largely unfulfilled. We might describe the book of Joshua as a hinge, connecting that ancestral promise to its future fulfillment.

The book of Joshua is not just a historical story. Chapter 1 is almost entirely comprised of direct speech. God spoke to Joshua in verses 2-9, then in verses 10-18 Joshua instructed the people, and they responded to him. Nearly every verse entails direct speech. And chapter 2 contains one of the longest confessions of faith in the Bible.

In Joshua 1:2-9, God did all the talking. He bluntly told Joshua what he already knew. Moses was dead. Moses's death carried stark implications. The Lord gave Joshua the task of leading God's people across the Jordan River so they could claim the gifted promised land. God promised that He would be with Joshua and would not abandon him. God encouraged Joshua to be strong, to cling to the word of God, and to not be discouraged.

In verses 10-18, Joshua summoned Israel's leaders and told them they would cross the Jordan River within three days. The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh had settled on the east side of the Jordan River. Joshua reminded these three tribes of the commitment they had made for their very best soldiers to accompany the rest of Israel across the Jordan and take possession of the land west of the river. Only then could they go back to settle in their own territory east of the Jordan. The people responded in support of Joshua's demands, "We will obey you, just as we obeyed Moses" (v. 17). At the heart of this encounter with these three tribes is the promise of rest in Joshua 1:13. The book of Joshua uses rest as a metaphor for taking possession of this wonderful promise of God. And, in the New Testament, Jesus is the ultimate rest giver (Heb. 4).

Like a pair of bookends, Joshua 1 and Joshua 24 link God's promise to Abraham in Genesis to its fulfillment to the post-exodus generation. The exodus generation died in the desert, but this next generation would drive out the current inhabitants and take possession of the land.

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

Joshua 1:2-5 summarizes the entire book of Joshua. The Israelites began with crossing the Jordan River (1:1-5:12), then possessing the land (5:13-12:24), followed by distributing the land among the tribes and the renewal of the covenant (13:1-24:33).

### VERSE 1

---

**After the death of Moses the LORD's servant, the LORD spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses's assistant:**

**After** flags one function of the book of Joshua. God's leaders may die, but God's promises never do. We do not know how long *after* Moses's death this encounter between **the LORD** and **Joshua** took place, but it must not have been very long. **The LORD spoke** may strike readers as unremarkable since God speaks so often in the Bible. But can you imagine Joshua wondering, "Now that Moses is gone, will God speak to me too?" Yet, the Lord spoke to Joshua as He did with Moses. This word is the same word used in Genesis 1, when God spoke all that is into existence.

**Joshua** means "Yahweh is salvation." Moses changed his assistant's name from Hoshea ("Save!") to Joshua ("the Lord is salvation," Num. 13:16). In Greek, *Joshua* is exactly the same word as the name "Jesus." Both the conqueror of Canaan and Redeemer of the world bear the same name. Jesus is our Joshua. Joshua is called the **son of Nun**. Very little is known about the family, but Joshua and his father, Nun, are mentioned in a genealogical list of the tribe of Ephraim in 1 Chronicles 7:20-29. Joshua has a rather long history. The Lord said that His Spirit was with him (Num. 27:18). He led Israel to victory over Amalekites (Ex. 17). He alone accompanied Moses on the holy mountain (24:13-14). As one of the twelve spies, Joshua along with Caleb urged Israel to obey God and enter the land (Num. 14:5-9).

Joshua was no young man when Moses died. He was **Moses's assistant** (Ex. 24:13; 33:11; Num. 11:28; Josh. 1:1) and successor to Moses (Deut. 34:9). Joshua was the new Moses.

### VERSE 2

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**"Moses my servant is dead. Now you and all the people prepare to cross over the Jordan to the land I am giving the Israelites."**

No person is indispensable. God’s instruments may change, but His promises never do. God bluntly told Joshua, **“Moses my servant is dead.”** But God’s promise still lived on, and work needed to be done. Joshua had to prepare to take the next step. He was not told to continue to mourn, nor to hunker down in grief or fear, nor to evade the future. He was to act.

The first obstacle to taking the promised land was crossing **the Jordan** River. The Jordan is a natural barrier on the eastern side of Canaan, just like the Mediterranean is on the west. Even today, it separates the country of Israel from the country of Jordan. The most direct route from Egypt to Canaan was not across the Jordan, but because the exodus generation had disobeyed God’s leading, God forced Israel to wander outside of Canaan for forty years. Consequently, the new generation of Israel would enter Canaan from the east.

The Hebrew phrase translated **to cross over** is a recurring expression in the book of Joshua. It refers to crossing the Jordan (Josh. 3:14,17; 4:1,13; 22:19; 24:11). It is also used in reference to crossing over boundary lines between tribes (15:3,6-7,10; 16:2,6; 18:13,18-19). It can even mean to overstep the covenant (Josh. 1:11; 3:2; 24:17; Dan. 9:11). But it never means to cross over from life to death.

**“Now you and all the people”**—note the change from *after* (v. 1) to *now* (v. 2). The word *now* is used over and over again in this chapter. Every tribe, including those who would live east of the Jordan, was to cross over the Jordan to take possession of the land west of the Jordan.

The destination would be **“the land I am giving the Israelites.”** The Hebrew word for *land* occurs about 110 times in Joshua. The root “to give” occurs more than 90 times. The land is both destination and gift, promised to Israel’s ancestors (Gen. 12:1; 12:7; 15:7; 17:8; 24:7). Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob sojourned from place to place in Canaan. The only place they officially owned was the burial place of the ancestors of Israel at Hebron. It had been 400 years since the time of Israel’s ancestors, the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The land did not belong to the people of God. It belonged to God. It remained His and His alone.

### VERSE 3

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**“I have given you every place where the sole of your foot treads, just as I promised Moses.”**

Note the parallel phrases, “I am giving” (v. 2) and **“I have given”** (v. 3). Such language is similar wording to Deuteronomy 11:24, “Every place the sole of your foot treads will be yours.” God alone is the Giver, and humans

are God’s agents in that gift. For Joshua this promise was personal. And it was not just “I have given,” but **“I have given you.”**

The gift was not for those who were content to live in Egypt, but for those who would press ahead. The expression **sole of your foot** is used both negatively and positively in the Bible. At times it refers negatively to painful and incurable boils on a person’s knees and thighs, “from the sole of your foot to the top of your head” (Deut. 28:35). Absalom was described positively as handsome and highly praised “from the sole of his foot to the top of his head, he did not have a single flaw” (2 Sam. 14:25).

#### VERSE 4

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**“Your territory will be from the wilderness and Lebanon to the great river, the Euphrates River — all the land of the Hittites — and west to the Mediterranean Sea.”**

Verse 4 describes geographical markers of a precise territory. God laid out precise boundaries to the north, south, east, and west (see Gen. 10:19; Num. 13:17,21-22; 34:3-12). The desert lies to the south, Lebanon and all the land of the Hittites to the north, the **Mediterranean Sea** to the west, and the **Euphrates River** to the east. Today these boundaries would incorporate portions of Israel, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Turkey, and Iraq.

The Bible calls the southern boundary **the wilderness**. In the ancient Near East, the wilderness denoted a desert. When you head south from Jerusalem, it is only minutes before you hit wilderness. The northern boundary of this promised land is defined as **Lebanon** and **the land of the Hittites**. Lebanon was pretty much where it is today, but ancient Hittite territory overlapped much of modern-day Turkey. The Hittites had influence all over the region, including Syria, Canaan, and all the way to Egypt.

#### VERSE 5

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**“No one will be able to stand against you as long as you live. I will be with you, just as I was with Moses. I will not leave you or abandon you.”**

God uttered three promises to Joshua. First, **“no one will be able to stand against you.”** This promise is similar to the language of Deuteronomy, “Don’t be afraid of them, for the LORD your God fights for you” (Deut. 3:21-22). Second, **“I will be with you.”** The divine name *Yahweh* is theological shorthand for “I will be with you.” God’s name literally means “I am.” The name itself is a potent promise. Third, **“I will not**

**leave you or abandon you.”** These words echo God’s promise to Jacob in Genesis 28:15, as well as the pledge Jesus made to His disciples in the Gospel of John (John 14:18).



### **Explore Further**

Read the articles “Joshua: Leader of the Conquest” on pages 298–299 and “The Promised Land: a Crucial Locale” on pages 237–241 in the *Holy Land Illustrated Bible*. What are a few descriptive characteristics of the Jordan River Valley across from Jericho?

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## **Joshua’s Assignment** (Josh. 1:6-11)

Joshua’s task was to conquer the land of Canaan and allot that land to Israel’s twelve tribes. The forces of Israel would participate in three campaigns: a central campaign beginning at Jericho, a southern campaign in the heart of Canaan, and a northern campaign to include Hazor and its surrounding towns. But even more importantly, Joshua was to know and follow God’s written instructions presented in the Torah.

### **VERSE 6**

**“Be strong and courageous, for you will distribute the land I swore to their ancestors to give them as an inheritance.”**

The exhortation to **“be strong and courageous”** is repeated four times with slight variation in Joshua 1 (1:6,7,9,18). To follow in the shoes of someone like Moses had to have been daunting. Yet, Joshua had proven himself up to the task time and time again. The five-fold task ahead was no small chore. They had to cross the Jordan. Then they had to enter the land and establish a presence there. They had to engage in a long, hard struggle with hostile forces of oppression in the land. They had to agree to a fair distribution of the land. Most importantly, they had to do away with internal corruption and organize their society modeling God’s covenant teaching.

**Land**, as we have already seen, was an essential element of God’s promise to the ancestors of Israel (Gen. 12:7; 26:3; 28:13). God **swore** an oath to Israel’s ancestors, and that oath was restated at the end of the

book of Deuteronomy when Moses delivered his farewell to Israel. He admitted that he himself would never cross the Jordan. Then he summoned Joshua before the people and challenged him to be strong and courageous so that Israel could take possession of the land (Deut. 31:1-7).

The land was Israel's **inheritance** from God. The book of Numbers emphasizes that inheritance, particularly how it was to be passed down from one generation to the next. In the New Testament, the theme of inheritance in Christ is emphasized, predestined by God with the Holy Spirit as the believer's down payment (Eph. 1:11,14).

#### VERSE 7

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**“Above all, be strong and very courageous to observe carefully the whole instruction my servant Moses commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right or the left, so that you will have success wherever you go.”**

Again God charged Joshua to **“be strong and very courageous”** (see v. 6), reflecting Moses's challenge to both the Israelites (Deut. 31:6) and Joshua (v. 7). God was to be the source of their strength. In the New Testament, Paul echoed to the Ephesians believers: “be strengthened by the Lord and by his vast strength” (Eph. 6:10).

God commanded Joshua to **observe carefully the whole instruction** God had given the Israelites through His **servant Moses**. Remember, Joshua went with Moses on the holy mountain when he received the commands of God (Ex. 24:13). The expression **do not turn from it to the right or the left** is used in Deuteronomy 17:11, where the Israelites were commanded to strictly follow the Levitical priests' instructions and legal verdicts.

The meaning of the Hebrew terms for **success**, “prosper,” and “succeed” (v. 8) are rarely used in reference to financial success. Rather, they refer to succeeding in life's endeavors, in this context Joshua's success in his military campaign leading the Israelites.

#### VERSE 8

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**“This book of instruction must not depart from your mouth; you are to meditate on it day and night so that you may carefully observe everything written in it. For then you will prosper and succeed in whatever you do.”**

Joshua was to be a man of the **book**, not just a man of the sword. This **book of instruction** (Hebrew: *Torah*; “law,” Deut. 29:21; 30:10; 31:26;

Josh. 8:31,34; 23:6; 24:26) refers to “the whole instruction” of God (Josh. 1:7). It was to **“not depart from your mouth.”** As we will see with the narrative about Rahab in chapter 2, oral confession lies at the heart of faith. Romans 10 says that the message of faith is in our hearts and in our mouths. Salvation comes when we confess with our mouths “Jesus as Lord” and believe in our hearts “that God raised him from the dead” (Rom. 10:9).

The command **to meditate on** God’s instruction **day and night** has a parallel in Psalm 1:2. We usually think of meditation as a quiet, contemplative task. But this meditation is no silent activity. It, like faith, is a verbal act. The Hebrew word means to utter a growl or mutter under one’s breath. The Hebrew word for **observe** actually means to do. To observe is not merely standing and watching, but rather to act.

The word translated as **prosper** is from a verb that means to advance. It is an active word that means to rush into something or move forward powerfully. And most importantly, as previously noted, just like the word for **succeed**, almost never has anything to do with money. Success and prosperity mean to live a wise and actively prudent life.

#### VERSE 9

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**“Haven’t I commanded you: be strong and courageous? Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”**

**“Haven’t I commanded you?”** is not a request for information. God’s question recapitulates His previous utterance: “Be strong and very courageous” (v. 7). Added to these two statements is encouragement, **“Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”** It was time for Joshua to move.

#### VERSES 10-11

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**Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, “Go through the camp and tell the people, ‘Get provisions ready for yourselves, for within three days you will be crossing the Jordan to go in and take possession of the land the LORD your God is giving you to inherit.’”**

Joshua addressed **the officers of the people**. These officers were not military officials, but administrative and spiritual leaders. The expression is only used here, but the word for *officer* is used five times in Exodus 5 to refer to the foremen that the Pharaoh had set over Israel to

make sure they were keeping up with the required number of bricks for Egypt's building projects (Ex. 5:6,10,14,15,19; see also Num. 11:16-17; "officers for your tribes," Deut. 1:15-16). Later in the Bible, an *officer* refers to a royal official or military commander (2 Chron. 26:11).

Joshua told the officers to **"go through the camp."** When the books of Joshua and Judges use the word *camp*, it means a military encampment. The logistics of providing for troops in battle are daunting. Here, Israel had to prepare by gathering **provisions** of food or supplies, like dried foods, grains, and other non-perishable items.

To **take possession** is to inherit. In English, these words mean different things but they are the same word in Hebrew. It is a covenant term deeply tied to the fulfillment of God's promises (Lev. 20:24; 25:46; Num. 33:53; Deut. 2:31; 9:1,4,5; 11:31; 12:29). The first time that biblical writers used this word is Genesis 15:3,4,7. Here in the focal verse, the Hebrew literally reads, "You will inherit the land that the LORD your God is giving you to inherit." Or, "You will take possession of the land that the LORD your God is giving you to take possession of."



### Explore Further

Read "Inheritance" on pages 799–800 in the *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Revised and Expanded*. How is the concept of an inheritance used in reference to God and His people in the Old Testament? In the New Testament?

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## Israel's Response (Josh. 1:16-18)

The eastern tribes promised Joshua that they would cross over the Jordan River ahead of their brothers and sisters. There was to be no rest for them until there was rest for their brothers and sisters. Only then could they go home.

### VERSES 16-17

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**They answered Joshua, "Everything you have commanded us we will do, and everywhere you send us we will go. We will obey you, just as we obeyed Moses in everything. Certainly the LORD your God will be with you, as he was with Moses."**

Leaders only have as much authority as people give them. Leadership must be recognized by God’s people. Israel displayed the kind of unity essential for success. The eastern tribes overcame the temptation to see themselves as an exception. The representatives of eastern tribes encouraged **Joshua** by their willingness to follow Joshua as they had followed **Moses**.

Exodus 24:3-8 describes the covenant ceremony enacted by Moses and the Israelites. The people promised, “We will do and obey all that the LORD has commanded” (Ex. 24:7). Numbers 32 describes the eastern tribes’ plea to Moses that they be allowed to settle on the eastern side of the Jordan River. They promised, “But we will arm ourselves and be ready to go ahead of the Israelites until we have brought them into their place . . . We will not return to our homes until each of the Israelites has taken possession of his inheritance. Yet we will not have an inheritance with them across the Jordan and beyond, because our inheritance will be across the Jordan to the east” (Num. 32:17-19). The eastern tribes kept their promise. When Israel crossed the Jordan, their soldiers went ahead and fought for their brothers and sisters.

## VERSE 18

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**“Anyone who rebels against your order and does not obey your words in all that you command him, will be put to death. Above all, be strong and courageous!”**

This is startling. Biblical law does have certain commands which, if violated, carried the penalty of death. But these words are a blanket condemnation and judgment of any among the people of the eastern tribes who rebelled against Joshua. Just as they had recognized Moses’s authority, now similarly they recognized Joshua’s authority. They would follow Joshua as Joshua led them in obedience to God— **“Above all, be strong and courageous!”**

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### **Explore Further**

Read the article “Tribes of Israel” on pages 1601–1604 in the *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Revised and Expanded*. How could the tribal nature of the Israelites be a positive for them? What were some of the negative results of Israel’s tribal makeup?