

Joshua 1:1-6 | Sunday July 5, 2026

Last week we began studying the book of Joshua. The book opens with a very dramatic scene. Moses, the servant of God, has died, and Joshua has been declared the new leader. Israel is encamped at the plains of Moab (Deut 34:1). The problem with this is that the promised land and the fortified city of Jericho lie on the other side of the Jordan River that is currently at its flood stage (Josh 3:15). The new leader, Joshua, has an immediate crisis to deal with. A raging river stands between him and what he was called to inherit, and it is yet to be seen if the Israelites will follow him at all. The Israelites could stay and wait to see if the river would go down. They could continue to mourn Moses. They could set up cities in the plains of Moab or even turn back to Egypt. With Moses' death, some might have been doubting if the promised land was still promised. In all this uncertainty, God is so gracious to speak to Joshua and encourage him with truth and lead him with clear direction.

Joshua 1:1-6 ESV

- (1) After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant,
- (2) "Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore **arise, go over this Jordan**, you and all this people, **into the land that I am giving to them, to the people of Israel.**
- (3) Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses.
- (4) From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory.
- (5) No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.
- (6) Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them.

God is letting Joshua know that His truth and His promises are immortal. The promises of the promised land did not die with Moses. God is still faithfully leading His people, and it is time for them to arise and go over the Jordan into the promised land. **It is not time to wait or turn back but to arise and inherit.** God's simple command could have seemed utterly impossible. **Israel had been on the edge of the promised land before and failed to enter it.** And that time they had Moses, and there was not a raging river in the way. Joshua would have known all of this as He was directly involved. Memories of their failure would have been lingering for Joshua. It is really important to understand what caused Israel to fail to enter the promised land the first time so that we do not make the same mistakes they did. Understanding their failure will also help us to see what needs to change for them to succeed this time, with even more going against them.

Numbers 13:1-2; 17-20 ESV

- (1) **The LORD spoke to Moses**, saying,
- (2) "Send men to spy out the land of Canaan, **which I am giving to the people of Israel.** From each tribe of their fathers you shall send a man, **every one a chief among them.**"
- (17) Moses sent them to spy out the land of Canaan and said to them, "Go up into the Negeb and go up into the hill country,

(18) and **see what the land is**, and whether the people who dwell in it are **strong or weak, whether they are few or many**,
(19) and whether the land that they dwell **in is good or bad**, and whether **the cities that they dwell in are camps or strongholds**,
(20) and whether the land is **rich or poor**, and whether there are trees in it or not. Be of good courage and bring some of the fruit of the land.” **Now the time was the season of the first ripe grapes.**

Both Joshua and Caleb were chosen to spy out the land along with 10 other men, all of whom were leaders among the people of Israel. They were to investigate and see if the land flowing with milk and honey actually lived up to its name. **In reality, they were to go see whether what God had claimed was true or not.** They were also to see what would be involved in conquering the promised land. The spies were to find out if there were fortresses with strong warriors or if it was a ghost town with small unprotected villages.

Numbers 13:21-23; 27 ESV

(21) So they went up and spied out the land from **the wilderness of Zin to Rehob, near Lebo-hamath.**

(22) They went up into the Negeb and came to Hebron. Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, the descendants of Anak, were there. (Hebron was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.)

(23) And they came to the Valley of Eshcol **and cut down from there a branch with a single cluster of grapes, and they carried it on a pole between two of them;** they also brought some pomegranates and figs.

(27) And they told him, “We came to the land to which you sent us. It flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit.

The spies went directly through the middle of the promised land. They spent 40 days visiting cities and being amazed at the land. They gathered samples of the amazing pomegranates and figs. They even cut down a single cluster of grapes that was so big that they carried it on a pole between two men. When they came back, **they fully confirmed that the land was as great as God had claimed it would be. God’s word was proven true.** Look at how God described the promised land years later.

Ezekiel 20:6 ESV

(6) On that day I swore to them that I would bring them out of the land of Egypt into a land that I had searched out for them, **a land flowing with milk and honey, the most glorious of all lands.**

God describes the promised land as the most glorious of all lands. It is hard to fathom how incredible the promised land must have been. Flowing with milk means that livestock were plentiful and healthy. Flowing with honey means the bees, the pollinators, were abundant, which implies the crops and produce were bountiful as well. The spies just confirmed all that God had promised was true.

Numbers 13:28-29 ESV

(28) **However, the people** who dwell in the land **are strong**, and **the cities are fortified and very large.** And besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there.

(29) **The Amalekites** dwell in the land of the Negeb. **The Hittites, the Jebusites,** and

the **Amorites** dwell in the hill country. And **the Canaanites** dwell by the sea, and along the Jordan.”

It is truly sad that these verses are introduced with however. This shows the doubt and fear that have already crept in. The spies give an account of all the mighty people who live in the land. **The cities are fortified, and the people are strong.** This report could have been summarized simply by referring to Genesis 15.

Genesis 15:18-21 ESV

(18) On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, **“To your offspring I give this land,** from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates,
(19) the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites,
(20) **the Hittites,** the Perizzites, the Rephaim,
(21) **the Amorites, the Canaanites,** the Girgashites and **the Jebusites.”**

The spies could have simply said that the land has the exact people God said it would. The land was as great as God claimed, and it was filled with the exact people God promised it would have in it. Instead of seeing the inhabitants as confirmation of God’s word, most of the spies began to doubt and be full of fear. **The earthly challenges dominated their thinking instead of the amazing God who made truthful promises.**

Numbers 13:31; 14:3 ESV

(31) Then the men who had gone up with him said, **“We are not able** to go up against the people, **for they are stronger than we are.”**
(14:3) **Why is the LORD bringing us into this land, to fall by the sword?** Our wives and our little ones will become a prey. **Would it not be better for us to go back to Egypt?”**

They doubted their own strength, and they doubted what God was doing. They did not trust in His love and goodness to them. They would rather be slaves in Egypt and even start to look for a leader to take them back. They could not move past the fact that the inhabitants were stronger than the Israelites. **The amazing thing is Caleb and Joshua would not disagree with this fact.** Their confidence was not in their own strength or military might but in the God who promised.

Numbers 14:6-9 ESV

(6) **And Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes**
(7) and said to all the congregation of the people of Israel, “The land, which we passed through to spy it out, **is an exceedingly good land.**
(8) **If the LORD delights in us, He will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that flows with milk and honey.**
(9) Only do not rebel against the LORD. And do not fear the people of the land, **for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the LORD is with us;** do not fear them.”

Caleb is willing to speak up and tries to bring the people back to truth. For Caleb, God’s Word had been confirmed. So why would God’s Word that they would be victorious fail? He knew that with God on their side, their enemies would be like bread to them. The other 10 spies refused to have an eternal perspective. So often we can get focused on the details and facts of a situation and

completely ignore processing the situation through the lens of the Word of God. **All 12 spies saw the same people. Only 2 filtered this through the truth of God.** How do God's people who are thinking earthly respond when they are challenged to think spiritually and to trust in God?

Numbers 14:10 ESV

(10) **Then all the congregation said to stone them with stones.** But the glory of the LORD appeared at the tent of meeting to all the people of Israel.

They wanted to stone Caleb, and Joshua. Not only did they refuse to accept truth and trust in God but they were willing to kill anyone who attempted to trust Him. Worldly believers can be such a hindrance to the Spirit filled life. God disciplined that generation so that they could not enter the promised land.

Numbers 32:11-12 ESV

(11) 'Surely none of the men who came up out of Egypt, from **twenty years old and upward**, shall see the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, because they have not wholly followed me,

(12) **none except Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenizzite and Joshua the son of Nun, for they have wholly followed the LORD.'**

The adults who had a say, those who were 20 and older, were held responsible for the rebellion. The Levites were not disciplined because they did not send a spy and had no land inheritance in the promised land (Num 1:49 & 14:29). Caleb and Joshua wholly followed the Lord and were assured that they would enter into the promised land. The true nature of this rebellion and Israel's failure to enter the promised land is perfectly explained in Hebrews 3.

Hebrews 3:11-12; 16; 19 ESV

(11) As I swore in My wrath, **'They shall not enter My rest.'**

(12) Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you **an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God.**

(16) For who were those who heard and yet rebelled? **Was it not all those who left Egypt led by Moses?**

(19) **So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.**

God's people who left Egypt and were covered by the Passover lamb fell away from the living God. They were unable to enter the promised land due to their unbelief. **This is not the belief for salvation but is the belief or trust needed to grow and mature with God.** It is the belief of taking God at His Word and believing He will do what He claimed. Caleb and Joshua believed God would give the victory; the others had an unbelieving heart. **As believers, we can have an unbelieving heart.** Verse 12 is the application written to the brothers, believers in Jesus. We can choose not to trust in God's promises and in His character. Whenever we do this, we fall away from and lose our rest and contentment in Him.

So as Joshua stands outside the promised land for the second time, God takes time to encourage him, to believe. God brings Joshua back to His truth and His promises. **Trusting, believing God, is what will make the difference between failure and success.**

Joshua 1:3-6; 9ESV

(3) Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon **I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses.**

(4) From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun shall be your territory.

(5) No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, **so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you.**

(6) **Be strong and courageous**, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them.

(9) Have I not commanded you? **Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.**"

God promises never to leave nor forsake Joshua and His people. The word for leave also means **to fail, be weak, grow slack, or be inactive**. God is renewing His promise that He will never be weak or inactive and fail Israel or Joshua. Notice that Joshua is not told to gather his own strength and grit his teeth in determination. It is not a matter of how positive of a thinker Joshua is. **Joshua is to find courage and strength in the promise that God will be with them.** Joshua's strength is to come from God and His presence. This is the same promise that God has called so many throughout the word to find comfort in and trust in.

In **Genesis 26:2-3**, God told Isaac, "**Do not go down to Egypt**; dwell in the land of which I shall tell you. **Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you and will bless you.**" Isaac had a choice between trusting in the help that Egypt could provide or resting in God's presence.

In **Genesis 31:3** God called **Jacob** to "**return to the land of your fathers and to your kindred, and I will be with you.**" Jacob was to trust in His presence and return to the land of His fathers even with the potential danger looming of going back to where Esau was.

In **Exodus 3:12**, when Moses doubted how he could ever confront Pharaoh, God responded with the truth, "**But I will be with you.**" Then in

Judges 6:16 Gideon wonders how He could ever help Israel win a battle against the **Midianites**, **and God responds with this same truth: "But I will be with you."** The difficulties and the trials of each situation are different, yet God's reminder of truth to rest and trust that He would be with His people is consistent. We need to know that God has called us as believers to trust and rest in this same promise.

Hebrews 13:5-8 ESV

(5) Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, **for He has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."**

(6) **So** we can confidently say, "**The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?**"

(7) Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, **and imitate their faith.**

(8) **Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.**

There is nothing more important than for God's people to hear the truth that God promises to be with us in the middle of whatever difficult circumstance we might find ourselves in. **The Spirit-filled life is found as we trust God, finding our strength and encouragement in the truth that God is with us and can be trusted.** We are not trusting in a certain outcome but in the

good God who promised to be with us.
