

Joshua 1:7-15 | Sunday July 12, 2026

At the beginning of the book of Joshua, God's people are at the edge of the promised land for the second time. 40 years before this moment, Israel tried to enter the promised land and failed. Hebrews 3:19 makes it clear that Israel's core sin was the reason "they were unable to enter because of unbelief." God's people who had gone out that morning and collected the manna that God had given for food did not trust that God would be able to give them the land. That generation was judged for their unbelief. Now Joshua's first instruction as Israel's new earthly leader is to arise and go inherit the land God wants to give them. Joshua and the people will have to believe, to trust, that God will be with them and give them the victory. God knows our weaknesses and doubts and encourages Joshua three times to be strong and courageous.

Joshua 1:5-9 ESV

(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.

(7) **Only be strong and very courageous,** being careful to do according to all the law that Moses My servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success wherever you go.

(8) This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

(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."**

Joshua is called to be strong and courageous in the fact that God has promised to be with him. Joshua is not being called to strategize or rely on himself but to anchor into God's presence. Both of these words, "strong" and "courageous," carry the idea of **making firm, hardening, or strengthening**. Joshua is called to harden and firm into the idea that God will be with him. This is not the first time that Joshua has been encouraged with this truth. God instructs Moses in Deuteronomy **1:38** and **3:28** to encourage Joshua and to strengthen him in the role of helping Israel inherit the promised land. Moses is obedient to God's command.

Deuteronomy 31:7-8 ESV

(7) Then Moses summoned **Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel, "Be strong and courageous,** for you shall go with this people into the land that the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall put them in possession of it.

(8) **It is the LORD who goes before you. He will be with you; He will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed."**

Moses encourages Joshua to be strong and courageous. The entire nation hears this. After all the years of leadership, Moses had firsthand knowledge that strength and courage came from God's presence and not from self. Moses knew how important this message was. Then God goes even a step farther from having Moses encourage Joshua, and God encourages Joshua Himself.

Deuteronomy 31:23 ESV

(23) And the **LORD** commissioned Joshua the son of Nun and said, **“Be strong and courageous, for you shall bring the people of Israel into the land that I swore to give them. I will be with you.”**

It is important to understand that all of these encouragements by Moses and God to be strong and courageous **are the context behind Joshua 1 and its three more encouragements to be strong and courageous.** I find so much hope in this. **God graciously knows who we are and how prone we are to fear, discouragement, doubt, and self-reliance.** God is willing to repeat Himself multiple times. God knows that this is not a lesson that Joshua will be able to learn overnight and that Joshua will need regular reminders of this amazing truth. Joshua is to rest and become strengthened or hardened into the fact that God will be with him. It is a truth that seems too simple and yet will take us a lifetime to grow into. David is a great example of this.

Psalm 54:1-4 ESV

(1) To the choirmaster: with stringed instruments. A Maskil of David, when the Ziphites went and told Saul, “Is not David hiding among us?” O God, save me by Your name, and vindicate me by Your might.

(2) O God, hear my prayer; give ear to the words of my mouth.

(3) For **strangers have risen against me; ruthless men seek my life;** they do not set God before themselves. Selah

(4) Behold, **God is my helper; the Lord is the upholder of my life.**

1 Samuel 23:15-29 tells us the background of this Psalm. David was hiding in the mountains, and the Ziphites told Saul exactly where he was. In this exposed, dangerous situation, David wrote Psalm 54. He came back to the truth that his life was in God’s hands. God was David’s helper and the one who held up David’s life.

The situation comes to a very dramatic moment with Saul on one side of the mountain and David on the other. God used a raid from the Philistines to distract Saul and protect David. It was an amazing moment for David to see God’s protection. God had reaffirmed that He was with David. This is what can make the events of 1 Samuel 27 confusing.

1 Samuel 27:1 ESV

(1) Then David said in his heart, **“Now I shall perish one day by the hand of Saul.**

There is nothing better for me than that I should escape to the land of the Philistines. Then Saul will despair of seeking me any longer within the borders of Israel, **and I shall escape out of his hand.”**

Instead of relying on the truth that he knew in Psalm 54, David relied on his own thinking. This shows how many reminders and encouragements to rely on God’s truth we need. David had watched God protect him time and time again, **and yet relying on his flesh and letting his fear and doubts take over was always available to him.** This is why God encourages Joshua so many times. It is why He encourages us in His word so many times. We need to constantly remind ourselves of God’s truth and anchor to it. Remaining in God’s word is what will help Joshua be strong and courageous.

Joshua 1:7-8 ESV

(7) Only be strong and very courageous, **being careful to do according to all the law that Moses My servant commanded you.** Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the

left, that you may have good success wherever you go.

(8) **This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night**, so that you **may be careful to do** according to all that is written in it. **For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.**

Joshua would have had the first 5 books of the Old Testament that Moses had finished writing. He was currently living in the 6th book. God wanted Joshua to do 3 main things concerning the Word. First, it was not to “depart from your mouth,” meaning Joshua was to talk about the truth. God’s Word was to be a regular part of everyday conversation.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 ESV

(6) And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart.

(7) You shall teach them diligently to your children, and **shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.**

We are to talk about God’s Word when we have downtime with friends or family and everywhere else we go. God’s Word is to be a normal part of life. Talking about God’s truth does not have to be a formally planned thing. **Our children are to see our heart for God and His Word by how everyday normal things are discussed through it.** The Word is not supposed to be something that we engage with once or twice a week and never talk about again. God desires for His truth to be involved in each aspect of our lives. To talk about the Word, Joshua would need to follow God’s second command to “**meditate on it day and night.**”

Psalms 77:11-12 ESV

(11) **I will remember** the deeds of the LORD; yes, **I will remember** Your wonders of old.

(12) **I will ponder all Your work, and meditate on Your mighty deeds.**

We have to know the Word to talk about it. **Meditation is more than reading scripture.** It is similar to the difference between eating food and then letting our bodies digest that food. Eating a nice meal takes about an hour, then our bodies start to digest and get all the nutrients that they can. The digestion can take anywhere from **14 to 58** hours, with the average person digesting food in about **28** hours. In the same way, intaking scripture can be done very fast, but meditating on it is a slow process that must take time. It is remembering what God has done and pondering how He has worked. If we just hear scripture and then never meditate on it, that would be like chewing up our food and then spitting it out and never letting our bodies digest it. We would get weak very quickly, and so often this is what happens in our walk with God. **Just like we need digested food daily for our physical body, our spiritual life needs to meditate on truth on a regular basis.** Meditating on the Word is not the last step.

Joshua 1:8 ESV

(8) This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, **so that** you **may be careful to do** according to all that is written in it. **For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.**

We are to meditate on the word so that we can be obedient to it. Joshua will have success and prosper in the promised land if he is obedient to the Word. This should make absolute sense; **it is God’s promised land, and His Word describes how to live in it.** Likewise, as believers, we

will enjoy the Spirit-filled life as we walk in obedience to the Word of God. Our rest is found in living in His Word.

Hebrews 4:9-13 ESV

- (9) **So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God,**
(10) for whoever has entered God's rest **has also rested from his works as God did from His.**
(11) **Let us therefore strive to enter that rest,** so that no one may fall by the same sort of disobedience.
(12) **For the word of God is living and active,** sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, **and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.**
(13) And no creature is hidden from His sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.

As believers, we can enjoy resting in God because of all that Jesus has accomplished. We are called to strive to enter that rest. This shows how hard it is for us to trust and rest in His finished work. Next, God explains to us how amazing His Word truly is. His Word can separate out our motives and what is going on in our hearts. **Successfully living the spirit-filled life is not found in a new strategy or new curriculum but is found in the Word of God.** Joshua's success will be tied to how closely he talks about, meditates on, and is obedient to the Word. So, after all this encouragement, Joshua obediently takes the next step and starts to get Israel ready to cross the Jordan River and enter the promised land.

Joshua 1:10-15 ESV

- (10) And Joshua commanded the officers of the people,
(11) "Pass through the midst of the camp and command the people, **'Prepare your provisions,** for within three days you are to pass over this Jordan to go in to take possession of the land that the LORD your God is giving you to possess.'"
(12) And to the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh Joshua said,
(13) **"Remember** the word that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, saying, **'The LORD your God is providing you a place of rest and will give you this land.'**
(14) Your wives, your little ones, and your livestock shall remain in the land that Moses gave you beyond the Jordan, **but all the men of valor among you shall pass over** armed before your brothers and shall help them,
(15) until the LORD gives rest to your brothers as he has to you, **and they also take possession of the land that the LORD your God is giving them.** Then you shall return to the land of your possession and shall possess it, the land that Moses the servant of the LORD gave you beyond the Jordan toward the sunrise."

One of the first things the people have to do is prepare provisions for the journey in the promised land. This is something the people have not done in 40 years, as there has been a daily supply of manna. We will see in chapter 5 when and why these provisions will be needed. Secondly, Joshua has to deal with the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh. Back in Numbers 32, they had made a deal with Moses that Joshua needed them to honor.

Numbers 32:1; 5 ESV

(1) Now the people of Reuben **and the people of Gad** had a very great number of livestock. And they saw **the land of Jazer and the land of Gilead**, and behold, **the place was a place for livestock.**

(5) And they said, "If we have found favor in your sight, **let this land be given to your servants for a possession. Do not take us across the Jordan.**"

The tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, who join in later, had no interest in crossing the Jordan River and going into the promised land.

They thought practically and saw land that would be great for their livestock. They approached Moses with the idea of making this land their inheritance. **The giant problem was it was on the wrong side of the Jordan.** Eventually that land would have been included in the promised land, but **it was not what God had for them at that time.** This pained Moses as His greatest desire, which He pleaded with God about many times (Deut 3:23-26), was to enter into the promised land, and here were 2 and ½ tribes that did not care about it. Moses lets them know they have made a huge mistake.

Numbers 32:6-9; 14 ESV

(6) But Moses said to the people of Gad and to the people of Reuben, **"Shall your brothers go to the war while you sit here?**

(7) **Why will you discourage the heart of the people of Israel from going over into the land that the LORD has given them?**

(8) Your fathers did this, when I sent them from **Kadesh-barnea to see the land.**

(9) For when they went up to the Valley of Eshcol and saw the land, **they discouraged the heart of the people of Israel from going into the land that the LORD had given them.**

(14) And behold, you have risen in your fathers' place, **a brood of sinful men**, to increase still more the fierce anger of the LORD against Israel!

These tribes were content not to be a part of what God was doing, and they would have been a discouragement to the entire nation. They were repeating the same mistakes that their fathers had when they failed to enter. This was not a good decision. These tribes are called a brood of sinful men. Even after 40 years of wandering in the desert, **these tribes did not think walking in what God had for them was a big deal.** All they could see was land for their livestock. **God's people were focused on earthly things instead of what was eternal.** This decision did not benefit these tribes eventually. Jesus traveled to these tribes during His life, and they were raising pigs (Mat 8:28; 31). Pigs should have been viewed as incredibly unclean to a Jewish community, and **yet on the wrong side of the Jordan, it had become part of life.** Moses was clear that it was wrong for them to want their inheritance there, but God would allow it. God does not force us to walk close with Him. If these tribes were willing to miss out on what God had for them, He would let them.

Psalms 32:8-9 NKJV

(8) I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; **I will guide you with My eye.**

(9) Do not be like the horse or like the mule, Which have no understanding, **Which must be harnessed with bit and bridle, Else they will not come near you.**

We can be like a horse or mule and be proud and stubborn. God will use a bit to direct us, but we will miss out on so much that He has for us. Or we can be led with His eye, as He looks on us and shows us our next step that we can only see because we are looking to Him. Now these tribes respond well to Joshua and are willing to go fight with the rest of Israel, but their lack of belief cost them so much.
