

Joshua Digging Deeper Week 1

Getting to know who Joshua was and what life was like for him before he became the leader of the Israelites will help us to better understand his experiences and how he came to be the leader. While we don't have any details about his upbringing, we know that it took place in slavery in Egypt. Regardless of our upbringing, being raised in slavery is hard for us to relate to today. We are going to spend a little bit of time looking back at what life was like for the Israelites in Egypt.

How did the Israelites come to live as slaves in Egypt?

Exodus 1:8-14 Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. ⁹And he said to his people, "Behold, the people of Israel are too many and too mighty for us. ¹⁰Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, lest they multiply, and, if war breaks out, they join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land." ¹¹Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with heavy burdens. They built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses. ¹²But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and the more they spread abroad. And the Egyptians were in dread of the people of Israel. ¹³So they ruthlessly made the people of Israel work as slaves ¹⁴and made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and brick, and in all kinds of work in the field. In all their work they ruthlessly made them work as slaves.

The Israelites became slaves because of the FEAR of the Egyptians – they feared they were becoming too numerous and might turn on them. An acronym I learned for fear years ago has always stuck with me:

False

Evidence

Appearing

Real

Can you think of a time when that was true for you? When your perception of a situation was distorted and the way you saw a person or a situation was inaccurate? Sometimes, when that happens, we tend to see the person or the situation from a distorted point of view because the lens through which we are seeing is distorted.

In my own life, I allowed someone to tell me that one of my friends really didn't like me. What I didn't know at the time is that the same person who told me that had told my friend that I didn't want her to be part of a group that we were in – basically that I had voted her off the island. Because of the lie told to me – I began to see this friend through a distorted lens. Everything she said and every interaction we had I was looking for confirmation that she didn't actually like me. When we go looking for the bad – we often find it, even when it doesn't actually exist. Unfortunately, that friend, unbeknownst to me was doing the same thing – she was looking for confirmation that I didn't like her. Because we never talked about it – we allowed the FEAR of the other person not liking us, we went almost 10 years without speaking. It didn't happen overnight, but it did happen. We allowed false evidence – our distorted perceptions to appear real – to become our reality. By the grace of God we eventually had a conversation and realized that we were both told lies about each other. The Lord

in his graciousness has healed our friendship and restored our relationship. He brought reconciliation where neither of us would have thought possible. We were friends before but now we are best friends. The Lord didn't simply restore our previous relationship – He made it stronger and rooted it in His truth.

Have you ever experienced FEAR (False Evidence Appearing Real) only to later realize you were wrong – your perceptions were distorted or you believed something to be true that was actually a lie? Are you struggling with a relationship where this might be the case? Pray and ask the Lord to reveal the TRUTH to you. Pray about whether the Lord is calling you to have a conversation – without my friend and I finally talking 10 years later – we would not be reconciled today.

The Israelites were slaves in Egypt for 400 years. We are going to jump forward from the original time of slavery until near the end of slavery. We know that their time in slavery was not easy – the oppression by the Egyptians continued to increase.

What do you think it was like to be a slave in Egypt?

Think about the weather – it is a desert climate where temperatures reach in excess of 120 degrees in the summer. Remember, this is well before air conditioning. In addition, they were required to work hard labor year round. This could not have been an easy life for men, women or children and since it lasted 400 years, it was largely all the Israelites knew.

It was all Joshua knew and then God stepped in.

Exodus 2:23-25 During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help. Their cry for rescue from slavery came up to God. ²⁴ And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. ²⁵ God saw the people of Israel—and God knew.

Look at the verbs in verses 24-25 God heard, remembered, saw and knew. God heard their cries. The same is true for us today. God hears our cries – He hears when we call out to Him. How does it make you feel to know that God hears you? What does it do to your faith to KNOW that God hears you?

God heard their cries and He remembered the covenant He had made with the patriarchs. He had not forgotten the people of Israel. He doesn't forget us. Just as He didn't forget the covenant He had made, He doesn't forget the promises He has made to us. God's promises are true. Below are just a few promises of God.

- **God will love you forever**
 - Psalm 136:1 *Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.*
- **God will comfort you**
 - Isaiah 49:13 *...For the Lord has comforted his people and will have compassion on his afflicted.*
- **God is our refuge and strength**
 - Psalm 46:1 *God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.*
- **God will never leave you**
 - Hebrews 13:5 *...I will never leave you nor forsake you.*
- **God knows you**
 - Psalm 139:1 *O Lord, you have searched me and known me!*
- **God will fight for you**
 - Exodus 14:14 *The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.*
- **God forgives you**
 - 1 John 1:9 *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*
- **God's mercies are new every day**
 - Lamentations 3:22-23 *The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.*

Which promises do you need to claim today? Who do you know that needs to be reminded of the promises of God? Pray and ask the Lord to show you who needs to be encouraged by His promises and then step out in faith and encourage them today. His promises aren't just for us – He wants us to share them with others.

The Lord heard the cries of the Israelites, He remembered His covenant and Exodus 2:25 tells us: *God saw the people of Israel—and God knew.* God saw and He knew. God saw the struggles of the people and the oppression that they were under. God saw the suffering of Joshua. He knew how difficult life was for him. God sees you and He knows what your struggles are. While God sees and knows, He wants us to share our struggles with Him. What do you want to share with the Lord – what do you want to make sure He sees and knows about you?

After hearing, remembering, seeing and knowing the Lord acted. He sent Moses to rescue His people. In the process He sent plagues to encourage Pharaoh to let His people go. Anyone singing “Let My People Go’ song about now? Let’s take a look at what the plagues were not just for a history lesson, but for us to understand what Joshua saw and experienced.

- **Blood**
 - The Nile River along with all of the water in Egypt turns into blood. (Exodus. 7:14-24)
- **Frogs**
 - Frogs covered the land of Egypt. (Exodus 7:25-8:15)
- **Gnats**
 - The dust turns to gnats and covers the people and animals in Egypt (Exodus 8:16-19)
- **Flies**
 - Flies fill the houses and land of Egypt. (Exodus 8:20-32)
- **Livestock**
 - All of the livestock of the Egyptians die, but the Israelites’ livestock was not even sick. (Exodus 9:1-7)
- **Boils**
 - Festering boils break out on the Egyptians and their animals (Exodus 9:8-12)
- **Hail**
 - Hail strikes down everything in the fields – humans, animals and trees. (Exodus 9:13-35)
- **Locusts**
 - Locusts devour every tree and plant in the land of Egypt. (Exodus 10:1-20)
- **Darkness**
 - Darkness covers the land of Egypt for three days, but the Hebrews have light as usual. (Exodus 10:21-29)
- **Firstborn**
 - Every firstborn son and firstborn cattle in Egypt dies, but Israel is spared. (Exodus 11:1-10, 12:29-32)

Joshua lived through and experienced the plagues – those that impacted both the Egyptians and the Israelites. He also saw the difference when there were plagues that impacted the Egyptians but the Lord spared the Israelites. What an amazing experience – to see God working in such powerful ways. There is no doubt this would have had an impact on Joshua and his faith.

What do you think the impact was on Joshua? What do you think Joshua KNEW about God?

How have you seen or experienced God moving powerfully in your life or the life of someone you know? What impact did it have on your faith or the faith of others who saw and experienced God moving or even heard about how God moved in your life? Pray and ask the Lord to reveal to you if there is part of your faith journey that He wants you to share with someone else.

When the Israelites headed out of Egypt, the Lord went with them.

Exodus 13:21-22 And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. ²² The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people.

Joshua saw the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud leading them. There was no doubt that the Lord was with the Israelites as they were able to constantly SEE His presence. What do you think being able to SEE the presence of the Lord leading them had on Joshua? What impact would it have on you if you could see exactly where the Lord wanted you to go? Why do you think we aren't able to physically see the Lord like the Israelites did?

In addition to the presence of the Lord leading the way, Joshua also experienced the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea.

Exodus 14:42-23 Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. ²² And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

Joshua had experienced slavery, the plagues, the physical presence of the Lord in the pillar of fire and pillar of cloud and the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea. He became an assistant to Moses and saw how the Lord met with Moses and how Moses led the people. The leadership of Moses had a huge impact on Joshua.

Joshua saw Moses' relationship and dependence upon the Lord. He was there when Moses received the commandments for the second time, he stood outside the tent of meeting where Moses met with the Lord and he experienced success on the battlefield based on Moses keeping his arms raised and the Lord giving them victory.

There is no doubt Moses and his leadership and discipleship had an impact on Joshua. What do you think that impact was? Has someone in leadership impacted your faith walk – if so, who and what impact have they had? Who's spiritual life are you impacting by your leadership and discipleship?

We are to be discipling others and sharing our faith journey with them in order to further the kingdom of God. Who does the Lord want you to share your faith journey with today? Who does the Lord want you to disciple? What are you willing to do to be obedient in discipling others?

The first time we hear about Joshua is in Exodus 17.

Exodus 17:9-13 So Moses said to Joshua, "Choose for us men, and go out and fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand." ¹⁰ So Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought with Amalek, while Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. ¹¹ Whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed, and whenever he lowered his hand, Amalek prevailed. ¹² But Moses' hands grew weary, so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it, while Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side. So his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. ¹³ And Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the sword.

Joshua's success was based on Moses' arms being raised. However, Moses couldn't keep his arms raised – he 'grew weary' so Aaron and Hur stepped in and held up his hands. This is such a beautiful picture of why we are supposed to be in community. Our faith journey is not so supposed to be just me and God or just me and Jesus. We NEED to be in community because we might need someone to lift us up or the Lord might use us to lift up someone else. Are you connected to a faith community? How have you experienced support and encouragement from your faith community? How have you shown it to others in your community?

While the Israelites were in the wilderness, Moses sent spies to check out the land of Canaan to see what they would be up against when they went in to possess the land. When the spies return they report that the land is flowing with milk and honey BUT the cities are fortified, the people are many and there are even giants in the land. They basically report that while the land is good, they could never conquer it. Only 2 of the 12 spies see it differently – Joshua and Caleb.

Numbers 14:6-9 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."

Warren Wiersbe says, "The ten spies looked at God through the difficulties, while Joshua and Caleb looked at the difficulties through what they knew about God." How do you view difficulties? Think back on difficulties you have faced in the past – did you look at God through them or view your difficulties based on what you knew about God? What about any difficulty you are facing today – how can you change your perspective and focus more on what you know about God? What do you need to remind yourself of today that you know about God?

Joshua was born a slave in Egypt, he had seen and experienced the amazing power of God freeing them from slavery. He experienced success in the battle with the Amalekites and in the spying out of the new land he saw good where others saw fear. Joshua trusted in the Lord and what He could do. What do you do when you face circumstances that seem impossible or overwhelming? Do you put your faith and trust in the Lord or do you allow your fear to trump your faith?

Moses was told by the Lord that he would not lead the Israelites into the Promised Land, that Joshua would be the one to do it. The Lord told Moses to encourage Joshua.

Deuteronomy 1:38 (The Lord said to Moses) Joshua the son of Nun, who stands before you, he shall enter (the Promised Land). Encourage him, for he shall cause Israel to inherit it.

Especially during this time of the COVID-19 pandemic, people are in great need of encouragement. Spend some time asking the Lord who He would have you encourage today. Record who the Lord wants you to encourage, be obedient and then come back and record HOW you encouraged them.

We see Moses living out that encouragement of Joshua.

Deuteronomy 31:7-8 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."

Be strong and courageous – a theme we will see again and again in Joshua. But what allows Joshua to be strong and courageous? Is it his own striving – his own will power or mindset or his own strength? No, it is because the Lord goes before him and the Lord will be with him. Whatever you are facing today – you don't have to strive or even muster up your own will power – be strong and courageous because the Lord is with you! Just as He went before Joshua, for those who put their faith in Christ, He goes before you and is WITH you and will NOT LEAVE you.

Take a minute to write a prayer thanking the Lord for His presence in your life. If you are struggling to be strong and courageous, ask the Lord to strengthen you and show you how He is present in your circumstances.

The book of Joshua begins with words that the Lord spoke directly to Joshua. Just as the Lord had previously spoken directly to Moses, He now was speaking to Joshua.

Joshua 1:1-2 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."

The Lord tells Joshua – arise and go. Moses has died and the Lord needs Joshua to carry on. For those who have lost loved ones, you know how hard it can be to carry on. Joshua didn't just have to carry on with his own life but he had to carry on as the new leader of the Israelites. As we are in the midst of the pandemic – some of us can find ourselves feeling a little down, maybe even a little depressed. The letters in DEPRESSION if rearranged are can become I PRESSED ON. Is the Lord telling you today – arise and go? Is He telling you to press on with Him – because He IS with you? He has a plan for all of us and it isn't to do nothing. We are to serve Him even in the midst of a pandemic, even when we have limited contact with others. How does the Lord want you to arise and go today?

The Lord was giving the Israelites the land He had promised not just to Moses and Joshua, the promise went all the way back to Abram – before he became Abraham.

Gen. 15:18-21 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."

According to J. Vernon McGee, "God gave Israel 300,000 square miles of land and the most they ever claimed was 30,000 square miles." Think about that – they were given 300,000 square miles but only every possessed about 1/10th of it. J. Vernon McGee then says, "That is about the same amount of spiritual possessions claimed by believers today." OUCH!

Ephesians 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places

This verse in Ephesians says we are blessed with EVERY spiritual blessing – not some or a portion but every. Are you taking full advantage of the spiritual blessings you have been given? Do you avail yourself of wisdom and guidance of the Lord by seeking Him in prayer and LISTENING to what He has to say? Do you seek wisdom and guidance from His Word? Do you follow the promptings of the Holy spirit? How is the Lord calling you to live more fully into the spiritual blessings you have been given?

Joshua 1:3-4 Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses.

EVERY place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I HAVE GIVEN to you... Not some of the places, but EVERY place and the Lord didn't say might give it to them or he will think about giving it to them, He said, "I have given". The Lord gave and they needed to step out in faith and take it. It's that stepping out in faith where the rubber meets the road. IF we believe what the Lord says and we trust WHO He says He is, we will be more likely to step out in faith – we will be more likely to trust Him. How willing are you to step out in faith? Pray and ask the Lord to reveal how He wants you to step out in faith. Be obedient and record below how you stepped out in faith.

We hear the be strong and courageous again and again but this time is followed with a warning, 'being careful' – Joshua needed to follow the ways of the Lord – he was not to go his own way – veering off to the right or the left, but remaining on the path the Lord has set before him in order for him to have success.

Joshua 1: 7-9 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.

Joshua’s success as the leader of the Israelites -taking them into the Promised Land would be dependent up on his obedience. St. Augustine says, “The cost of obedience is small compared with the cost of disobedience.” This couldn’t be more true for Joshua. IF Joshua would follow the Lord’s plan – the Lord would go before them, be with them and give them victory over the people of Canaan so the Israelites would be able to possess the Promised Land the Lord had given them.

The same is true for us – the Lord has a plan for our lives but it requires our obedience. Are there areas of your life where you are not willing to be obedient to the Lord? Are you obedient in some but not all? Are you willing to be obedient with your finances? Are you willing to be obedient to the Lord and willing to forgive those who have hurt you? Are you willing to be obedient to the Lord by humbling yourself and putting others’ needs above your own? What areas of your life do you struggle to be obedient to the Lord?

Gracious Lord, thank you for the gift of Your Word. Because of it, we have the privilege of reading about who You are and how You interact with Your people. We are grateful to be called Your children and to be coheirs with Christ. We love you, Lord, and are excited to see what You have for us in this study of Joshua. As we journey into the Promised Land, transform our hearts and minds. Help us to look and be more like Jesus at the end of this study than we are at the beginning. Help us be light in this dark world. Give us a desire to be obedient to whatever you call us to do. We surrender our wills and desires to You, O Lord, as we study Joshua. We will be strong and courageous because we know You are with us. Amen.