

Living Offensively: Go

Joshua 1:1-11

I. We have our orders to live offensively; 1:1-9.

¹ After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide: ² "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. ³ I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. ⁴ 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. ⁵ 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. ⁶ "Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. ⁷ 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. ⁸ 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. ⁹ 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."

Moses' death was an important event in the life of the new nation of Israel. Yet Moses' death should not cripple the nation. Joshua was designated as Moses' successor, and the people were to carry on under him.

Joshua was Moses' aide and is distinguished from Moses in that he is not called "the servant of the LORD," as Moses is. The Book of Joshua refrains from calling Joshua by this title until the very last chapter; when Joshua dies, he is finally given the title of "servant of the LORD." The fact that Joshua does receive this title shows that he did fulfill the instructions that God gave him, in a similar way to Moses.

God stated that he was about to give the land to the Israelites. It is as though Israel already possessed legal title to the land, but they were awaiting God's timing for the actual possession. This new land is huge. But for Joshua the crucial question is not the size of the land but its ability to be conquered.

God promised to be with Joshua in the same way that He was with Moses. The task was impossible, yet God's presence would accompany Joshua just as it had Moses, and they would succeed in fulfilling God's promises.

The need for Joshua to be strong and courageous was serious because he was the instrument for the people to inherit the land. God's command is not to be terrified; not be discouraged. Undergirding Joshua's confidence is the fact that he is not alone. God leads the way and surrounds him with His presence.

The importance of obedience to God's Word is the key to Joshua's success. Joshua was to be careful to obey all the law Moses gave. Joshua was not to deviate from it even slightly, not to make any adjustments. Joshua was to meditate upon it by day and by night. The biblical concept of meditation involves a focus upon God Himself, His works, and His Word.

Prosperity and success are almost never used in the Bible to speak of financial success. Rather, they speak of succeeding in life's proper activities given by God. This happens when people's lives are focused entirely on God and obedience to Him. God's charge to Joshua ends by reiterating words of encouragement and commitment.

We have an even greater task than did Joshua. It has been given to us by Jesus. The task is also impossible on our own. God will make sure we finish what He has called us to do as long as we live obedient lives to His Word. Therefore, we too must be strong and courageous, not terrified, not discouraged, for the LORD our God will be with us wherever we go.

Joshua is finally given the title "Servant of the Lord" after he dies, proving that he did all that God wanted, just like Moses. Will you be called a "good and faithful servant" after you die?

When we even slightly adjust God's Word, we deviate from God's Word, and hinder the success that comes from obedience to His will. God's Word must be a priority. You can't be all you want to be, but you can be all God wants you to be through an obedient life.

II. We have to be ready to act to live effectively; 1:10-11.

¹⁰ So Joshua ordered the officers of the people: ¹¹ "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 told the leaders that sometime within the next three days they would be crossing the Jordan River to take possession of the land. Israel will only need a three-day food supply-enough for the transition. This is a historic moment. After centuries as vulnerable aliens in Canaan, oppressed slaves in Egypt, and desert nomads Israel is about to receive the long-awaited gift of land.

Stop waiting on God to give instructions. He already has. Take possession of God promises. What do you need to do or stop doing to be ready to live offensively?

Go – He will be with you.

Serve – He will resource you.

Grow – He will transform you into the image of Jesus.

Share – His Spirit will empower you.

Obeys – He will bless your efforts.

Suffer – He will comfort and bless you.

The scene in which God commissions Joshua closely parallels the scene in which Jesus issues. We have our offensive orders as believers.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

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. (Matt. 28:19-20)

Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' (Matt. 22:37-39)

Jesus, our Commander-in-Chief, commands Christians to move forward offensively. The temptation to remain safely within a "comfort zone" also seduces Christians. Our study of Scripture takes on a similar urgency if we are to be successful followers of Jesus. If Jesus' example is to shape our lives, we need constant immersion in His life and teachings for success.