



Happy 5 Year Anniversary CPC North! Can we thank God right now for his faithfulness over the years? Even though the 49ers are playing, there is no other place I'd rather be and I really mean that! I love you guys so much. It's such a privilege and an honor to be considered one of your pastors. It truly is a great joy for me to serve you. I want to thank our elders who truly seek the will of God for this church. I want to thank our staff from all three campuses who are cheering for us today. I'm grateful for our Central Support team who serves us behind the scenes every week. I especially want to thank the North Campus staff who put up with me and work tirelessly to serve the Lord and you as well. I want to thank every single one of our volunteers who serve our church simply because they love Jesus. Also, a big thank you to the Millbrae Lions for breakfast!

I want us to look at the first chapter of the book of Joshua.

After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide: "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. I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates—all the Hittite country—to the Mediterranean Sea in the west. No one will be able to stand 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. Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their ancestors to give them (Joshua 1:1–6).

Joshua Believed God Always Keeps His Promises

As I was praying and thinking about what to preach on for our 5 year anniversary, I just happened to be reading the book of Joshua in my own personal time with the Lord. I was struck with this man, his mission and the faith he demonstrated at an incredibly important time in the history of Israel. Leadership is all about influence. If you are a leader and no one is following you, then as John Maxwell says, "He who thinketh he leadeth and hath no one following him is only taking a walk." Joshua was a great leader and had great influence, but how did he get it? Where did his maturity and courage come from? Why would God choose this man to lead his people at a really important crossroads for the nation of Israel? What about us? Do

you want to be a great leader? Is there something happening in your life where you need great courage? Do you need to be encouraged this morning? In these verses we'll get answers to all those questions.

Let's try for a moment to get into the mindset and thinking of Joshua. The great patriarch and leader of Israel, Moses, is dead. This was a time of crisis and transition for a nation. Israel has been wandering in the desert for 40 years because of their disobedience. An entire generation of people have died off and a new generation are finally ready to enter the Promised Land. Joshua is the newly chosen leader who has to fill big leadership shoes. He's replacing Moses of all people! It was Moses who lead God's people out of slavery in Egypt. It was Moses who raised his staff to part the Red Sea. It was Moses who received the Ten Commandments. But, guess who was there right beside Moses the entire time? Joshua.

Joshua was not only a great military leader and spy, he was Moses' aide. Joshua was Moses' right hand man. He saw first-hand all the miraculous events recorded in Exodus. Joshua was there when the first Five Books of the Bible were written. Joshua got to see great leadership in action in Moses. In all of this, God was ultimately preparing Joshua for his new role. As you think about your own situation, maybe God has you right where he wants you. You may not like it, but God is preparing you for something greater than what you are doing now. Joshua reminds us to be faithful in small things and let God take care of the rest.

After the death of Moses, God speaks directly to Joshua. I love how the first person we hear from in this book is the Lord, the Great I Am. The Lord gives Joshua a really important pre-game speech. I am sure Jim Harbaugh went into that locker room today and fired up the players getting them ready for the game. But God's speech is much different. What Joshua needed was not advice but encouragement and that's what we see God do first. He reminds Joshua of his track record of faithfulness. God helps Joshua to remember all the great promises he's made in the past and his plans to fulfill them. He promises Joshua three important things.

First, God promises land. Israel was going to cross the Jordan River and take all the land God has been promising them for centuries. This is the land that has been promised to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses. Finally, they will enter the land. Second, God

promises Joshua victory. Remember, there were people living in that land and they were not going to give it up without a fight. Israel was not an impressive army of warriors. They would come against mighty nations. They needed God to fight on behalf of his people. Finally, God promised his presence. God promised to be with Joshua and Israel throughout it all. He said he'd never leave nor forsake him. We know from the rest of the book of Joshua that God answered every single one of his promises. Israel entered the Promised Land, they were given victory, and God was with Joshua until his death.

A friend of mine recently told me about a new initiative called, "Because I said I would." According to their website, "Because I said I would" is a social movement and nonprofit organization dedicated to bettering humanity through the power of a promise. To encourage positive change and acts of kindness, they send "promise cards" to anywhere in the world at no cost. People use these cards to remember the importance of their word, for promises both big and small. They have sent over 150,000 promise cards to over 48 different countries by request only. Here are some examples of how the cards have been used:

- » I will always fight heroin.
- » I will sincerely compliment one person each day.
- » I will donate a kidney to my brother London.
- » I will finish my half marathon in less than 2 1/2 hours.

Isn't that a great idea? A simple business card reads, Because I said I would. Then you write your promise on the card and keep it as a reminder.

For those of us who are followers of Jesus Christ, we should make cards that say, "Because He said He would." The Bible is full of promises God has made to his children. Unfortunately many of us don't know them or we tend to forget the ones we do know. It's really important to keep your promises, but we serve a God who **always** keeps his promises. There's a book I keep in my library. It's Dr. Herbert Lockyer's timeless Christian classic, *All The Promises Of The Bible*. In the introduction, here is what he writes: "It has been computed that there are 30,000 Bible promises. No indication is given as to how this colossal number is reached. Altogether, there are 31,173 verses making up the Bible; 23,214 verses comprising the Old Testament, and 7,959—the New Testament...Scattered throughout the Bible are hundreds of definite explicit promises forming the category Peter names as 'the exceeding great and precious promises' (II Peter 1:4)."

Joshua believed God always keeps his promises. God promises the land and victory to Joshua and Israel but the people must act and take it. Jesus promised to build his church, but we must act and participate in his plan. Thankfully, 5 years ago, by faith, we trusted in God's promise to build his church and started CPC North right here at Mills High School. Are you foolish enough to

believe the promises of God? What promises of God do you need to hold onto and believe in this New Year?

Joshua Believed in the Power of Obeying God's Word

Joshua not only believed in God's promises, he believed in the power of obeying God's Word. Look with me at verses 7–9,

"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. Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; 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. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."

In these verses, after some much needed encouragement from God, Joshua is commissioned to do three things—know God's Word, meditate on God's Word, and obey God's Word. I'm a little surprised by that. God doesn't give him a strategy for entering the land. He doesn't tell him how he will have victory over his enemies. Instead, he's charged to love God's Word. The secret to Joshua's success was not in his military strategies or in his leadership capabilities, although he was strong in both. His secret sauce was the Word of God. Joshua made understanding and applying the Scriptures, more than anything else, his number one priority in life. God wanted Joshua to be completely immersed in the Word of God because whatever shapes a person's thinking shapes their life. God didn't seem to care about what Joshua could do for him; God didn't need Joshua. What God was most concerned about Joshua's relationship with him. That relationship would be formed on the written Word.

Like Joshua, any Christian leader will be faced with multiple decisions to obey God's Word when it's not popular, doesn't make sense, or just plain scary. The temptation in leadership is always to ignore God's counsel and wisdom thinking we know better. Just look at any of the men and women in the Bible who failed miserably. All of them fell away from the Word of God. They stopped listening to his voice and because of that God did not give them success. That's what we need more of today. Not brilliant people or clever new methods, but obedience informed and motivated by the living and active Word of God.

It's also important to understand that just because Joshua obeys all God's instructions does not mean he will succeed. Obeying God's Law perfectly is not the point. That's exactly what got the Pharisees and Sadducees in trouble with Jesus. They loved following rules more than following Jesus. Joshua will succeed because God is with him, helping him to obey his instructions. See the difference? We as followers of Jesus don't succeed spiritually

because we obey God's Law. Jesus enables us and gives us the power to live for him. We can't live the Christian life on our own. Unless Joshua makes the meditation and obedience to God's Word his first priority, he will not succeed. His leadership will fail. The same is true for us.

Robert Kupferschmid was an 81-year-old with no flying experience. However, due to a tragic emergency, he was forced to fly an airplane. On June 17, 1998, he and his 52-year-old pilot friend, Wesley Sickle, were flying from Indianapolis to Muncie, Indiana. During the flight, the pilot slumped over and died at the controls. The Cessna 172 single-engine plane began to nose-dive and Kupferschmid grabbed the controls. He got on the radio and pleaded for help.

Nearby were two pilots who heard the call. Mount Comfort was the closest airport, and the two pilots gave Kupferschmid a steady stream of instructions of climbing, steering—and the scariest part—landing. The two experienced pilots circled the runway three times before this somewhat frantic and totally inexperienced pilot was ready to attempt the landing.

Emergency vehicles were called out and ready for what seemed like an approaching disaster. Witnesses said the plane's nose nudged the center line and bounced a few times before the tail hit the ground. The Cessna ended up in a patch of soggy grass next to the runway. Amazingly, Kupferschmid was not injured. Incredible story, isn't it?

This pilot listened and followed those instructions as if his life depended on it—and it did. Imagine what would take place in the lives of believers if we listened to and obeyed the Word of God with the same conviction that our lives depended on it. Apostle Paul reminded young Timothy, *"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work"* (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Studying the Bible is essential to walking with God and that is why we want everyone who attends CPC to take the E100 challenge. Starting on Monday, we will begin reading the Bible together for the next 100 days. I hope you are making plans to join us. There is more information out in the lobby today about E100. Let's not only read God's Word, we need to apply it. Joshua believed in God's promises, he believed in the power of obeying God's Word and finally, he believed God would always be with him.

Joshua Believed God Would Always Be with Him

Three times in this passage God tells Joshua to "be strong and courageous" and twice God reminds Joshua he will be with him. Joshua was chosen for this mission and he cannot avoid the responsibility God gave him. Even though Joshua was prepared, he was Moses' aide and a great army general, he still needed encouragement! He still needed to hear those words, *"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for*

the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." General George Patton once said, "Courage is fear that has said its prayers." Joshua's strength and courage come from his faith in God's promises, his faith in God's Word, and because the Lord will be with him through it all. When this passage talks about being successful, it has nothing to do with worldly wealth or worldly success. It has everything to do with accomplishing one's God-given mission on this earth.

Jesus promised to be with us too. Listen to his promise again, *"Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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. 28:18–20). Like Joshua, God has given us a mission to accomplish. "Go and make disciples." Then Apostle Paul reminds us, *"What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?"* (Romans 8:31). Sure, we'll have our share of problems and hardships, but God is for us! God is with us! Jesus also promised to build his church and the gates of hell will not overcome it (Matt. 16:18). CPC is alive and well because this is his church that he is building, not ours. We get to be part of the process by God's grace, but it's all for him and by him.

In his book, *Letters to My Children* Daniel Taylor responds to a series of questions from his young children. At one point his son Matthew asks, "Church is getting boring. Why do we have to go to church?" Here's part of Taylor's reply: Think about it. If a friend of yours called and said that a famous athlete or singer was going to be at his house, and asked if you wanted to come over, wouldn't you go? And wouldn't you be excited? Of course! And so would I.

Well, church is the place where God will be, every time you go. Of course he is with you whether you're in church or not, but he can be there in a special way when many believers gather to celebrate him together.

"Sounds great," I hear you saying, "but then how come you fell asleep so much? If God is really there, I mean really there, then how come we aren't bug-eyed and breathless most all the time?"

That's a very good question. I wish I had a very good answer. Part of it is that God knows we can't take very much of him. It's like when you hold Fluffs, our hamster. If you squeezed very hard, Fluffs would be on his way to hamster heaven. You have to hold him gently, talk to him quietly. Well, God has to be sort of like that with us.

Truthfully, though, the biggest reason might be that we don't want very much of God. We want God to stay in his cage like Fluffs does. We are afraid of losing control of our own lives. We just want him to help us a little here, and forgive us a little there,

and let us handle the rest. So we try to make church a safe place where we can get a little bit of God but not too much.

We don't like surprises, not even from God, so we make our churches places where surprises aren't likely to happen. We ask God to come, but only if he will be polite. Therefore, little kids and adult kids often fall asleep—even if they keep their eyes open.

And yet, at the very same time, church is a wonderful place. God has chosen it, "sorry-ness" and all, to be the place where he will meet his people, the place from which he will send his people to all parts of the world to preach the good news about him.

God is with us right here, right now and anything could happen. Do you believe that this morning?

I've title this sermon Journey of Faith because that's what I see in Joshua's life. When you know God's track record of faithfulness, like Joshua you'll want to respond with trust and obedience. The

truth is, we need more Joshuas. We need more people who will believe God's promises and act on them. We need more people who will believe in the power of obeying God's Word. People who won't merely be hearers of the Word but doers. And we need people who in faith trust God is always with them. A life with God is always a journey of faith.

The Bible says, "***And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him***" (Hebrews 11:6). Since it is a new year and we are celebrating God's faithfulness to CPC, let me end with a great faith-stretching question: What's the most humanly impossible thing you will ask God to do this year? Let's ask for faith like Joshua.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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