

Final Prayer

Thank You, heavenly Father, for the call that You have placed upon our lives. You have loved us, given us Your love, and revealed Your truth to us; help us therefore to give you the best of our time and energy so that we may be used in Your service. All praise to You, heavenly Father. AMEN

Prayer

In this world of jumbled emotions, confusing situations, mixed up rights and wrongs, and unknown futures, O Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Redeemer, be our sanctuary of peace and security. Thank You for the assurance of eternal peace with God the Father by means of Your death and Resurrection; for this is our Faith, our sure hope and certain destiny. AMEN

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: The Coming Year

Pray with thanks to God for leading His people from year to year, granting His blessings and adding to those who are saved by His grace. Praise Him for all that He is doing.

On-going prayers

- Give thanks for the internet and pray that God will use it for good
- Pray for scientists and engineers whose work affects us all
- Pray for Iraq and the country's prospects for 2009

Meditation

Lord Jesus, grant me the gifts and graces I need to do Your will;
May I be a faithful disciple of Yours, and may I

accept the nature of the life I have been given;
refrain from jealousy about the gifts of others;
hold my tongue so that I might not hurt others;
smile to show my true delight, and not falsely;
question my own motives and put others first;
conquer my anger before it can conquer me;
give attention to all so they know they are heard;
strive to be a peacemaker, and a person of love,

Complete this work of grace in me so that I may become more like You,
Christ Jesus, my Saviour and my Lord.

Bible Study - Joshua 1:1-9

¹ After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said this to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' assistant;

² 'My servant Moses is dead. Now, you and all this people, get ready to cross over the Jordan into the land that I am giving to them, to the Israelites. ³ Everywhere that you will place your feet I have given to you, as I promised to Moses. ⁴ Your territory will be from the wilderness and the Lebanon here as far as the great river (the Euphrates), and all the land of the Hittites as far as the Great Sea in the West. ⁵ 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 not leave you or forsake you.

⁶ 'Be strong and courageous; for you will put this people in possession of the land that I swore to their ancestors to give them. ⁷ Only be strong and very courageous, and be careful to do everything according to the law my servant Moses commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, so that you may be successful wherever you go. ⁸ Do not let this book of the law leave your speech; you will meditate on it day and night, so that you are careful to do everything written in it. Then you will become prosperous, and you will be successful. ⁹ Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or discouraged, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.'

Review

At the end of the great book of Deuteronomy, God's servant Moses was taken away to Mount Nebo (Deut 34:1f.) by the Lord, where he died. Moses had been Israel's enigmatic and powerful leader for a long time, leading God's people through the extraordinary experience of the Exodus from Egypt (Ex 12-14) and then through the formative years of the nation's history whilst travelling in the desert (as recorded in Exodus 16f., Numbers and Deuteronomy). Moses was a man of unique significance to the story of God's people in the Old Testament, but it had become clear that the Lord had been grooming a man to take over from Moses whose name was Joshua, the son of Nun (Josh 1:1f.).

Joshua, the man ready to lead Joshua figured significantly in the stories of Israel's wandering through the wilderness, leading the people of Israel against the Amalek (Exodus 17:9f.), accompanying Moses on his spiritual pilgrimages up various mountains (see 24:13 etc.), and being one of the 'spies' who entered the Promised Land. It was not Joshua's fault that the people became scared of the prospect of entering the Promised Land because of the reported presence of 'Nephilim' who appeared to them to be huge (Numbers 13:33). God blessed Joshua and Caleb, the two spies who reported favourably about the Promised Land to the people, at a time when great judgement came on the rest of Israel (Numbers 14:1f.). Joshua was a man marked by the favour of God (Deut 3:28, 31:3f. etc.), so when Moses died and Israel stood poised to enter the Promised Land, Joshua was ready and willing to step into Moses' shoes.

Blessing for service Joshua may have been ready and willing, but he still needed God's specific blessing and anointing for service. Just as Moses met with the Lord at the burning bush (Exodus 3) and was commissioned to act, so Joshua was spoken to by the Lord God here at this critical moment of time in Israel's history. It is not easy for us to understand, but when one great ancient leader passed away, a power vacuum could be disastrous as others sought to take power; and later in the story of Israel things did not always go smoothly when one king died and another took his place (see 1 Kings 1 and 2 for example). A quick succession was necessary, and God moved swiftly to appoint Joshua with a prophetic word which connected Joshua seamlessly with the rule of Moses (Josh 1:1,2).

Taking the Promised Land Joshua's sole task was to take the Promised Land, the one covenant promise of God to the forefathers that had not yet been fulfilled (see Gen 1:2,3 and 13:14f.). The commission Joshua received has inspired people for centuries because the Lord promised Joshua total success in return for total submission; 'no one will be able to stand before you all the days of your life ... I will be with you ... only be strong and courageous' (1:5,6). The Lord showed Joshua the extent of the Promised Land (see verse 4), though the description of it here is not as straightforward as we might think (we will study this in more detail as the story of Joshua unfolds). The promise of success in taking the land was indeed absolute, and we will discover later whether Joshua was truly successful; however, after God's promise and instruction to take the land, most of our

passage today is a speech of encouragement by God to Joshua to be 'strong and courageous' (1:6,9)

Being courageous, successfully! These words are naturally famous, and often quoted. It is worth noting however, that they are said twice at the beginning and the ending of a section of God's speech that urges Joshua to undertake the disciplines necessary for success. Whilst courage and boldness would be important, the Lord told Joshua in clear terms to 'do everything according to the law my servant Moses commanded you' (1:7). In other words, the Lord required Joshua to be totally obedient to His revealed and written will, and not turning from it 'to the right hand or to the left' (1:7). In order for Joshua to fulfil this role and be obedient, the Lord told him he had to be someone who was utterly grounded in God's law, the only written scripture of the day (1:8); it had to be a natural part of his speech and his thoughts at all times. In the same way that the Bible comes alive to those who are converted today when they discover its spiritual power and authority, the Lord told Joshua that the way for him to succeed in his commission and call to obedience was to be a 'man of the book'. That is, a man who knew God's Word through and through.

This, of course, is God's Word to us today. If we wish to follow in the footsteps of those who have done great things for God, then our starting place must be loving our Lord so much that we love His Word, and get to know it deeply and intimately. Then we may find that we can be successful in doing His will, through obedience and faith.

Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. What can we learn from this passage today about obedience? What obedience does our Lord God require of His people today?
2. The church is sometimes coy in talking about 'success'. Do we need to feel embarrassed by success, and how can we aim for it?
3. How does this passage of scripture assist the faith of ordinary Christians?

Discipleship

Personal comment:

I find it fascinating that the message of God to Joshua is to become someone who was immersed in what was for him, the Word. Joshua only had the works of Moses by which to know God's ways, in whatever form they were held at that time, but God knew that this was sufficient for him. Joshua needed to be someone who was single minded and clear in his vision, and God gave him clear and precise instructions; how often do we long for life to be that simple! But it is often we who make life more complex than it need be, and our Lord will often have a message or a plan for our lives that is simpler than we think. One thing is certain, however, which is that being courageous and strong is not the heart of Christian faith, however important these characteristics are; it is obedience to God's Word.

Ideas for discipleship programme

- *How do you go about being a man or woman of God's Word? We hear the Lord speak to us in many different ways today, and scripture itself tells us to listen to the preached Word, to read the written Word, to live with Jesus the Word and to study the revealed Word. How do you know what God's Word for you is? Look for a specific and prayerful answer to your question!*
- *Pray for all who need true leadership today. Many of God's people languish for want of a good and godly leader, so pray for those who train leaders and those who are called to leadership.*