



JOSHUA 1

What is the greatest motivational thing you have ever experienced? Has there been something in your life that changed who you are forever: a pivotal moment? For me it was my grade 8 teacher Mr. John Neufeld. I was a really good kid in school, seriously. It was everyone else who was bad. Just ask Mr. Neufeld. Ok I'm kidding, but that grade 8 teacher made me think I was pretty good. To me, he was my childhood motivation to be more than I thought I was.

One day I was supposed to be at long jump practice. Mr. Neufeld took time out of his day to coach us. That day I did not show up. I didn't think he would have been mad. I was probably not the first kid to miss a practice. What did make him mad was that he found out I was fighting on the other side of the school. That made his time waiting for me wasted.

The coolest part of this story was Mr. Neufeld. He was retiring this year. I was one of a thousand kids that went through his classes over the years. There was no reason to think he wasn't passing his time, paying his dues, and looking past school towards retirement. Lucky for me he was a real teacher. He was one of

those few that were in it for the kids and not the career. In the principal's office after the fight, Mr. Neufeld gave me a motivational speech. Basically he let me have it. Oh and I remember it. He said. What are you doing with your life Pat Green, and your just wasting it away fighting, and doing poor in school? He told me to get a life for the most part.

What really hit me that day was not a teacher yelling at me. It was not the fact that I won the fight and kicked the tar out of the kid. No, it was a graying old teacher that took the time to pay attention to me. He called me Pat Green. He knew my name. He wanted to teach and inspire one last kid before he packed it in, and he chose me. Did you know the next year I had a 95% average right across the board. An inspiring event can change your life. Maybe inspiration is not only in our good words towards people. Maybe it's also in our actions too. Mr. Neufelds actions made my day, actually it made my life.

In 1992 at the Barcelona Olympics the actions of one person made a sprinters day. Watch this video.

Derrick Redmond's dad made his day. His concern for his son to run out on the track and help him finish the race goes down as one of the greatest moments in sport. How could that video not be inspirational? Sometimes we need that: a pick me up. We all can't be on top of our game all the time. At times we need others close to us to pick us up when were down. I have two favorites myself. The first is

Bambi's dad coming up to Bambi after he had been shot. Those words "get up Bambi, get up," Still ring in my ears. Sometimes it's more than a person that needs motivation. Maybe it's in a speech to a nation. The Gettysburg address by President Lincoln is one of those inspiring moments in American history. It goes like this:

"Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field as a final resting-place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead who struggled here have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living rather to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us — that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full

measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain, that this nation under God shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth.”

That is a speech and it changed a nation. In Joshua 1 God gives his people a motivational speech too. With that said would you please open your Ipad to Joshua 1. In a way this chapter changed a nation. From that moment on the Israelites changed from wandering nomads to establishing a nation and claiming the land. When someone is down, Christians go to this chapter for motivation. Some of the best lines from God are found here.

Let’s read the first few verses. **“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. 3 Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses. 4 From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea towards the going down of the sun shall be your territory.**

There are some very fascinating themes that jump out in these first verses. So let’s look a few. What if your closest relative or a good friend died? The grief

and pain from the lost could sideline you for weeks. I have not experienced that feeling in a long time and I am grateful for that. When my grandfather died I told myself “that’s it, never again.” I have secretly hoped I’d go first before I see another funeral. Is it because I have a death wish? No, I just hated the pain too much from the last one.

I believe Joshua and the Israelite family were experiencing that with the death of Moses. He had been their leader for over forty years. Someone might say “wait a minute wasn’t it just 40 years in the desert”? Yes it was but remember Moses also came back to Egypt to rescue them as the leader. There were also the plagues and the challenges by Moses towards Pharaoh. How long was that, 10 days? No it may have been quite some time. From slaves to a nation: the Moses reign as leader is all the Israelites ever knew. Yes, Aaron, Moses brother was there, but he was not the leader. It’s like Sidney Crosby. He is the leader of the Penguins, but when he is injured (often) Malkyn takes over. Malkyn might become leader but Sidney is still the one and only. Moses is like Sidney he has always been the one leading this team. It’s his writings, his laws, and his direction. The Bible always uses Moses in reference to leadership.

God probably realized these people were now gripped in fear. Their only leader was dead. How would this family go on tomorrow if I died? That is a good question, but what would it take to move on in our family here without me? There

would be so much to go through and change. It might seem over whelming for just a second until you replaced me.

God could see that in his children. How did God react to Moses death? Well, He does what he always does. He doesn't mix words, and he leaves nothing left to guess. Moses is dead, dead, dead. Joshua you are the new leader. You must take my people forward. God tells the truth and speaks plainly to his people. Why did God say that so bluntly?

I am sure Joshua was capable and ready: just as you would be if I was gone tomorrow. Still it must have been a shock. God is so good because at times we need a little shove. Joshua just got shoved. God said you got it so get at it. They were about to enter the promise land and God assigned them Joshua as the leader. There might have been others that wanted the job. God nipped that in the bud by appointing Joshua himself right at the start. The people knew there was no discussion when God spoke. They had seen that before.

Why did God pick Joshua? It is because Joshua had been there all along. Ex 17:9 says **“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.”** Moses was the boss but Joshua was his second in command, not his brother Aaron. Ex 17:13 **“And Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the sword.”** Ex 24:13 **“So Moses rose with his assistant Joshua,**

and Moses went up into the mountain of God.” Did you realize that when God spoke to Moses on Mt Sinai Joshua was there? He was always with Moses

In our first verse of Joshua 1 Moses is called Gods servant. “Servant” means to do the will of the master. Also in that chapter it calls Joshua a servant, but it’s a slightly different word like the three types of “there.” Servant in this verse can be translated minister. This means Joshua was serving or ministering to Moses like a slave to a master. Joshua took care of all Moses needs. He was almost stuck to him, but was Joshua ready to lead a nation?

It’s like driving with your mother. She takes you everywhere you want to go, and some places you don’t want to go too. It is fun being driven around the city. Then comes the day when you are the driver. On that first day you think “cool lets go for a spin by yourself.” The problem is: you know your city in the passenger seat, but you have not experienced driving in it before behind the wheel. Many times kids get lost on their first day driving in their own town. Joshua is the same. He has experienced leadership, and experienced God, but now it’s his turn to drive. God’s motivation in this chapter is to reassure Joshua and the People that Joshua is Gods choice and it will be just fine.

There are two things going on in this chapter. One is the motivational part. As I have said, God knows they need a pick me up after the death of their only leader. Let’s begin by going deeper into Gods great inspiration. Verses 1-4 begin

with God reassuring them that nothing has changed. Just because Moses is gone does not mean God is gone. God is not just Moses God, he is their God. The promises God made to Moses he made to them as well.

Sometimes we get really technical with the Bible. Many well-meaning Christians take the Bible too literally or too little. The promises are just for the Israelites. The commands are just for Jewish people: really? We encounter that misconception right here in chapter 1. The people thought this is Moses leadership, Moses laws, and Moses God, but God reassures them that this is their land, their laws, and there God too. Let's read verses 5-6. **“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.”**

To avoid misunderstanding scripture the word of God should always be taken in three ways. One: is what is being said to those people in their day, and in their understanding. What is going on with the people in the story? The second is what is being communicated by God to them. What is the purpose of the scripture in the bible, in that book, and at that time? The last is what is the word saying to the one reading it? Isa 55:11 says **“so shall my word be that goes out from my**

mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.”

This word to Joshua and the Israelites is meant for them but it is also meant for us because we are reading it. God is telling us that he will never leave us or forsake us. Just as he was with Moses he will be with us. That is our God. Come on seriously, isn't it like our God to protect us, stay with us, and hear us? Yes it is.

I believe once saved always saved. Now I know that is a really hot topic. Many Christians go out of their way to tell people their actions are going to hell. It get it. Yet, is that the character of our God? Isn't he with us through thick and thin? What makes you so special that God is compelled to let you into heaven? This chapter seems to give some of the answers to your salvation.

Motivationally speaking I believe God is saying if you are with him he is with you. Can't we just leave it at that or does there have to be a price to get into heaven? Is works needed as payment to enter heaven or just faith? Eph 2:8-9 says **“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not by works, so that no one can boast.”** Last time I checked this is the same God using the same Bible. God has not changed from Moses to Joshua and Joshua to you and me. Our first chapter in Joshua speaks this loud and clear. God is Emanuel “God is with us.” forever.

I am not a big fan of the Simpsons but once I saw the episode where Homer falls asleep in church. He dreams he and Marge are Adam and Eve. In the end they both get kicked out of heaven. Marge is mad at Homer and Homer says "how long could God be mad at us"? At that point Homer wakes up with the minister says forever, and ever, and ever.

The point is really that God is the same forever, and ever, and ever. The reason he offers us eternal life is that it means forever. God also uses repeating words several times in the Bible to make strong points. In our chapter, God repeats the words strong and courageous 3 times. God is a great motivational speaker. He is getting across to us that we are to get up like Bambi, like the sprinter Derrick Redmond, and America after Gettysburg.

Listen to God in verses 6 and 7 **"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."** And verse 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."**

That is motivation, and that is leadership. God is strong and God is purposed in his will. He is passing on this confidence to his people. God is saying he is mighty, he is strong. We are too if we go with God into the land he chose for us. This still is the same with us today. God is telling you right now. Go into the land I promised you and I will be there and never leave your side, just as I promised to Moses and Joshua.

One more thing about motivation from God: it has to do with the East. J Vernon McGee points out that walking north will end eventually. At some point you will begin walking south, and vice versa. The term east to the west; however, is forever and ever and ever. Walk east until you get to the west. It can't happen. You can end up in what we call western places, but if you walk east you will always travel east towards the sun. Verse 4 says **4 from the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites to the Great Sea towards the going down of the sun shall be your territory.** And verse 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 towards the sunrise.”**

Did you read the words “towards the sunrise” in the east? It means forever, and God has given us the whole world. Every place our feet touch is taken in the name of God. That is inspirational. We can have it all with God. We can and we will if we have God with us. It’s not about conquering it all but taking the God inside us, with us, and beside us into the land before us.

That brings me to the other side of this story: our calling. This is (by the way) our sixth sermon in the series on “Energizing church.” It is my hope that you will see that what God has given us: we are to take with us into the world. There is more to our calling than just being saved. There is more to our calling than just what we can do. God asks us to be strong and courageous in several ways in this chapter. Lev 10:10 and 11 says **“You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean, and you are to teach the people of Israel all the statutes that the Lord has spoken to them by Moses.”**

This is the same type of language God uses in Joshua 1. Listen closely to verses 7-9 **“Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to act in accordance with all the law that 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 This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way**

prosperous, and then you shall be successful. 9 I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

Yes we are to be strong and courageous just like I might tell my children to be good and happy. However this goes deeper with God. He is telling us to be strong and very courageous to act in accordance with the law he gave Moses. Why does God go further by adding very courageous? Well simply put this is the key to life with God. We are to be Christian if we say we are Christian. You can say your Canadian but if you join the Islamists and kill Canadians like Omar Kotar did in Afghanistan, you're not acting very Canadian are you? Canadians protect our people and country, not kill them. God is saying the same thing to Christian's right here in Joshua 1. This is how Christians should act and I expect it from you. The strong and courageous part means it will be hard, difficult and darn near impossible, but God wants us to try to go his way.

In the beginning of Christianity, Christians were called the people of the way. The way looked like the way they were, the way they acted, and the way people saw them. These early Christians were known as defenders of the way. They could distinguish between the sacred and the common. It was like Neimiah and the building of the wall in Jerusalem. They had a trowel in one hand and a

sword in the other. One side was building the faith up and the other was protecting it.

Today what are we known for as Christians? Are we defenders of the way? Most will say yes. I say no we are far from it. We have become survivalists. We adapt to save the church in a hostile culture. In Small Ville Tess Mercer said that religion must adapt to survive or it will disappear. Look at God in the Old Testament? Does he say adapt, does he say change with the times? Well no, he does not. God tells us to be strong and courageous because the road to keeping the faith is very lonely and very hard. We must be known for defending an unchanging God. That will be unpopular. We will need to be strong and courageous.

Look everywhere on the TV and the internet. Christians are known for sex, money, being hypocrites, and so much more. In our community, what are they saying or not saying about Christians. We want them to say nice things don't we? Yet, this world does not love the God or the Bible, does it? If we don't conform so that people feel comfortable, then usually, they reject us. It seems that rejection is more than we can bear at times. We have lost the sword in one hand. Where is the strong and courageous?

We now come bearing gifts. Those gifts are tolerance, apologies, and compromise for the way God is. We have gone so far we haven't even noticed we let go of the trowel too. The church is not being built up, but the world is slowly

tearing it down brick by brick. I don't think we have a clue what strong and courageous really means to God. Would you become a Christian if you knew to cost?

So what does this mean for us today? How can this chapter energize the church? We can find three answers in the last part of this chapter. The first is in verses 10 and 11 **“Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, 11 "Pass through the camp, and command the people: "Prepare your provisions; for in three days you are to cross over the Jordan, to go in to take possession of the land that the Lord your God gives you to possess.”**

Christian leadership must pass through the church and prepare them for battle. Prepare the people to fight for God. We need to make Christian defenders of the way strong and courageous. It says in verse 11 to prepare your provisions. Yes I know it means gather your family, things, and chickens, I get that. Seriously though it means to gather all you are for a fight. In Brave heart Mel Gibson kills a man at the beginning of the battle while in friendly negotiation. His fellow warriors asked him why? He said he came to pick a fight. That is strong and that is brave. It's not about killing someone, but the tenacity behind it. Christians are not here to defend and compromise. We are here to pick a fight with the devil.

Isa 40:11 says **A voice of one calling: “In the wilderness prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”**

Matt 3 says **“In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea 2 and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.” 3 This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah.”**

This is our calling too. To prepare the way, and to prepare ourselves to make straight paths to God. Compromise does not make straight paths. We have conditioned ourselves into believing that tolerance does make straight paths but it really does not. Read Joshua 1 yourself at home this week. What is it saying? Is God still that God today, or have we not the children he expected us to be? I think you will find the answer in your heart. Energizing church comes when we go back to the way Joshua saw it. Let’s read verse 8 again. **“This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to act in accordance with all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall be successful.”** What is the book of the law? It’s our Bibles.

Reading the word prepares you for battle. We have become accustomed to reading it for inspiration and comfort, but that is far from the point of this book. We are to prepare. Look at Joshua 1 again be strong and courageous to take the land, and follow the law. Yes God is inspiring us, and he says in this very chapter that we will gain success and comfort, but they come with a price. The world will

not like you if you stand up for Gods ways. But pat if they don't like me how can I witness? I am glad you asked.

It's not about image that counts but who we are that counts. We are Gods children. We are the same children found here in Joshua 1. The church will grow because telling the truth and acting like God is intoxicating, courageous, and good. People that love what is good will see that. I always tell women that come to faith this about their unbelieving husbands. Love them like Jesus would. Be Christian for them. They will either love you more and change or they will hate you more and leave. That is it in a nut shell. Be Gods child and let the chips land where they may. Far too often we try and take matters into our own hands and our own understanding. The real God in the Bible would pick a fight before he would compromise.

Ok let's all say the last verses below if you dare. Verses 16 to 18. Are we a people that will stand together and do whatever God asks of us? Will we be his children or the world's playground? The church has changed because we are giving in, compromising, and tolerating sin like never before. Are we the body of Christ?

Let's read this beginning in verse 16

“All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go.17 Just as we obeyed Moses in all things, so we will obey you. Only

may the Lord your God be with you, as he was with Moses! 18 Whoever rebels against your orders and disobeys your words, whatever you command, shall be put to death. Only be strong and courageous."