Joshua 1 • Spiritual Leaders & Followers

Introduction
One of the toughest issues we face is the tension between biblical teaching of a new life in Christ and having to live in a culture that is NOT based in Christ. Cultural versus biblical values clash at every level, particularly in the way that we approach church operations. More often than not, a secular corporate business model is employed to form mission statements, committees, select and employ staff, and so on to do the “ministry” of the church. But such a leadership structure is not necessarily biblical nor how God operates. There is a far different set of expectations placed on spiritual leaders and followers than within a corporate business culture as evidenced in the transition from Moses to Joshua and Israel’s second generation about to accomplish what the first generation so miserably failed to do.

Joshua 1:1-6

Q: What is the title here given for Moses?
A: “…the servant of the Lord…” (v.1)

Q: What is the title here given for Joshua?
A: “…Moses’ servant…” (v.1)

Q: What does this teach about the biblical definition of a leader?
A: They are a servant, someone doing their Master’s work and in turn concerned more for the needs of others than their own.

But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ. But the greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.

Matthew 23:8-12

Q: According to v.5 & 6, how is this legacy of service passed on from generation to generation and for what purpose?
A: It’s passed on by God (“Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you…”) in order to fulfill His plans and will that began before we were born (“…which I swore to their fathers…”).

Q: How might these opening verses be summarized as a life’s “calling” or for Joshua?
A: God is providing the greater, general instructions to the whole of Israel through Joshua as leader. God is not just passing the mantel of leadership down to Joshua from Moses but providing the specific goals for Joshua’s life as God’s servant to the people.

Joshua 1:1-6

1Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses’ servant, saying, 2“Moses My servant is dead; now therefore arise, cross this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them, to the sons of Israel. 3Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses. 4From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory. 5No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. 6Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.
“Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”

Joshua 1 • Spiritual Leaders & Followers, Page 2 of 3

[Read v.7-9]

Q: How are the instructions given to Joshua in v.7-9 very different than those God provided in v.1-6?
A: Whereas v.1-6 were more general instructions for Joshua’s service on behalf of the whole of Israel, these are personal instructions for Joshua’s service to God.

Q: 4 times in this chapter Joshua is admonished to “be strong and courageous”. What are the specific things listed in these verses that provide the foundation to “be strong and courageous”?
1. “...be careful to do according to all the law...” (v.7)
2. “...do not turn from it [the law] to the right or to the left...” (v.7)
3. “...the law shall not depart from your mouth...” (v.8)
4. “...you shall meditate on it [the law] day and night...” (v.8)
5. “...be careful to do according to all that is written...” (v.8)

Point: Essentially these are instructions to be completely immersed in God’s Word from one’s whole heart, mind, and soul.

Application: Does receiving a special “calling” or a vision for God’s work by the church place that leader above everyone else in terms of their personal walk? Do you see that leaders are called to the same level of obedience to God’s Word as everyone else? Another biblical term to describe a spiritual leader is “shepherd”. How are the qualities of a servant and a shepherd similar, and how should they reside in the life and character of spiritual leaders?

Point: This Joshua is a type of Joshua the Messiah (Jesus) to come. Just as God gave general revelation and direction for the church through Jesus, so Jesus also had to be totally and completely obedient to all of God’s Word in His service to and for God. This example is handed down through them to us.

[Read v.10-15]

Q: If God’s goals are revealed to the people through Joshua, how are they actually accomplished? What is the role of spiritual leaders and followers in the pursuit of God’s will?
A: The goals are accomplished by the people. The leader’s role is to point to God as the Source and motivation.

Application: Sometimes a member of the congregation states, “That’s why we pay the pastor.” Why is that an absolutely wrong position? Has any general won a battle without his troops?

Q: What is Joshua doing with the tribes beyond the Jordan? How does it relate to this discussion?
A: Joshua reminds them of their commitment to God and those things God has already been faithful in to them. He is preparing them to act upon God’s calling by holding them accountable to God’s Word, both in general and personally.
which Moses the servant of the LORD gave you beyond the Jordan toward the sunrise.”

They answered Joshua, saying, “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 Anyone who rebels against your command and does not obey your words in all that you command him, shall be put to death; only be strong and courageous.”

[Read v.16-18]

Q: How might this relate to God’s encouragement to Joshua in v.7-9?
A: In both cases, Joshua is encouraged to “be strong and courageous”, and in both instances the supporting message has to do with obedience to God’s Word. Just as God stipulated to Joshua that immersion in His Word is required, so here obedience to God’s Word through Moses and Joshua is defined.

Q: According to Old Testament Law, what was the general basis for putting someone to death?
A: The death sentence was meted out for breaking specific laws. In other words, it comes about by disobedience to God’s Word.

Q: How might we apply this to the context of the New Testament church?
A: It’s the general congregation’s responsibility to hold itself accountable to obedience to God’s Word. It’s not the sole function of a pastor or spiritual leader, but the corporate responsibility of every member of the body to hold every other member accountable to God’s Word.

Overall Application

- Do you see every member of the church’s first and foremost responsibility as personal obedience to God’s Word? Can the greater goals of an organization or movement succeed without it?

- Do you see yourself in a partnership with spiritual leaders, or do you still think in terms of it being “their” goals or “their” ideas? What is our responsibility for making such goals and ideas actually happen?

- Why is it not “good enough” for some in the body to participate and some not? Why is it our responsibility to hold each other accountable in our obedience to God’s Word and how it’s fulfilled in the work of the Kingdom?