



STRONG & COURAGEOUS

JOSHUA 1

The book of Joshua begins with an old dead man, thousands and thousands of people, and a river. But the story of Joshua really began centuries earlier. Here's what I mean...

Many years before, God gave a man named Abraham an incredible promise. Abraham was Joshua's great-great-great (and a lot more "greats") -grandfather. The promise went something like this: Abraham, even though you are 75 years old and your wife is even older than that, you will have many, many children - like, more than all the grains of sand on the seashore. Crazy, right!?

God also gave Abraham a land to live in. This land goes by a few names, but most of the time you'll hear it called the Promised Land.

God kept His promise and gave Abraham children. But his children were not always faithful to God. It's a long story, but eventually, one of Abraham's grandsons, Joseph, was sold by his brothers into slavery a *long* way from home in the country of Egypt.

After hundreds of years of making bricks out of mud and straw, God rescued His people from Egypt. For the next 40 years, Moses led Israel through the desert on their way back to the Promised Land.

Wait!?! 40 years!?! What took them so long?

Well, you see, that's the point. Sometimes God's people followed His commands and listened. But most of the time, they didn't.

And now, as they made their way to the Jordan River, at the edge of the Promised Land, Moses died.

To add to the problem, the Canaanites, who did not follow God, had built homes and cities and made Israel's land their own. What would God's people do now? Did God have a plan?

Of course, He did! Joshua, who served as Moses's assistant, would become Israel's next leader.

The Lord said to Joshua, "Go over the Jordan River and take the land I have given you. All that I promised to Moses, I now promise to you. Be strong and courageous and be careful to follow all of My commands. Do not turn from them and you will have success wherever you go. Be strong and courageous, for I am with you!"

Joshua then spoke to his officers (the people in charge of the soldiers). "Get everyone ready to cross the Jordan so we can take the land God has given us."

Turning to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joshua said, "Even though your land is on this side of the Jordan River, you will send your soldiers to conquer the rest of the land on the other side of the river. Once you've won back the land from your enemies, then you can come back and rest." (See Kaleidoscope Corner)



The people answered Joshua, saying, "All that you have commanded us we will do. Wherever you send us, we will go. Just as we obeyed Moses, we will obey you. May the Lord be with you as He was with Moses. Whoever dares to disobey you should be put to death. Be strong and courageous."

Now you should know right from the start that there are two big questions in Joshua that will shape the entire book...

1. Will God's people obey Him? Just because Israel was special to God did not mean they could do whatever they wanted. God knew the best way for them to live was by following His word.
2. Who is fighting the battle? In just a few short chapters, Israel will go to war against the Canaanites. But who is in charge? Israel or God? When Israel allows God to lead, they are victorious. But, when Israel tries to take matters into their own hands and do things their own way, well...things do not go very well at all!

BE STRONG
AND
COURAGEOUS

Kaleidoscope Corner

The Tribes

It may seem quite strange that God's people are divided into tribes. The Bible doesn't even spend that much time explaining it. Instead, the Bible assumes that the idea of tribes made perfect sense to the first readers of the Bible. It's sort of like if I talk about D.C. you might immediately think about Washington, D.C., where the White House and Capitol are, without needing much explanation.

Likewise, the story of Jacob (also known as Israel) was so well known at the time that the tribes needed very little help understanding. Each tribe came from one of Jacob's sons and was like a smaller family inside of the larger family of Israel.

Jacob's sons came from four different women. From Leah came Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun. From Bilhah came Dan and Naphtali. From Zilpah came Gad and Asher. From Rachel came Joseph (who split into two tribes named Manasseh and Ephraim) and Benjamin.

If you follow the story of the Bible all the way to Jesus, something really cool happens with the tribes. Paul, the writer of Galatians, calls those who are "in Christ" the "Israel of God." In Jesus, we have a new kingdom where there are no longer tribes. Instead, people from all tongues, tribes, and nations are a part of one family with God as our Father.