

Step-By-Step

Faithfulness: Joshua 1:5b-9, 3, 24:14,23

- A few weeks ago we talked about Joseph. And we talked about his patience and perseverance in the midst of getting sold as a slave by his brothers, being falsely accused and thrown into prison, and being forgotten about for two years while he was there.
- But we saw how God worked through all of that and ended up getting him in front of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt at just the right time, he got elevated to the 2nd highest position in the kingdom, and from that position was able to save his family and the nation of Israel from a severe famine.
- After getting reunited with this family, Pharaoh tells Joseph to have his entire extended family to come stay in Egypt. So they get this huge portion of land for the people of Israel where they continue to grow and flourish.
- After Joseph dies, a new king arises in Egypt that didn't know Joseph, and decided that the Israelites were a threat and enslaved them and

commanded that all of the male babies be killed.

- One of the Children to escape this genocide was Moses. God eventually sends Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. God, through the 10 plagues and parting the Red Sea puts the world on notice that There is One True God and these are His people.
- Moses leads the people back toward the land that God had promised to Joseph's great grandfather Abraham.
- Moses send 12 spies into the land to scout it out. Two of them, Joshua and Caleb say, "The Land is awesome! God has given it to us! Let's go take it!" The other 10 said, "But the people are big and scary and they'll probably kill us!"
- Everyone starts freaking out, Moses tries to reason with them, but they decide that they're gonna kill Moses and Caleb and Joshua and go back to Egypt.
- But God intervenes, and doesn't let them kill Moses, Caleb, and Joshua. And says that this generation won't enter the promised land, but their children will.

- The only two that can enter the promised land with their Children is Joshua and Caleb.
- So God makes them wander around the wilderness for 40 years until that generation dies off and now 470 years after the promise was given to Abraham, Joshua is about to lead the people in the Promised Land.
- ***“...Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. 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.... 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.” Joshua 1:5b-9 ESV***
- So next on our list in the fruit of the Spirit is Faithfulness. And I want us to walk through an overview of Joshua’s story as we explore:
 - WHAT IT TAKES TO LIVE BY FAITH
 - PRAY
 - Who here likes amusement parks? Let me see a show of hands, if you are amusement park people! I have sort of a love hate relationship with amusement parks. Mainly because I hate lines. I can’t stand standing in lines, I don’t like waiting, I want to do what I want to do right when I show up to do it. Can anyone relate?
 - I hate when I can see where I’m going or what I’m trying to get to, but takes an intolerable amount of time to get there. It’s the so close yet so far away dilemma.
 - The worst way this ever happened to me was a few years ago, Rachel and I were with a group of friends in Hershey, PA for a wedding. So we, as a group, got an awesome airbnb in right in downtown Hershey and we could see Hershey Park from where we were staying.

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- So of course, when you're in Hershey PA, the two things you want to do is go to the Hershey Chocolate factory, and go to Hershey Park... you gotta ride the Great Bear.
- So in my mind, I'm thinking, "We're not gonna have to deal with parking or traffic because we're so close, we can just walk over to the park!" I look it up, it says its about a 15-20 minute walk to the park, that's easy, we'll just get a few more steps in.
- I'm pretty sure Rachel asked me, "Are you sure you wanna walk?" And i'm just like, yea of course, we're saving money! We won't have to pay for parking. It's a no brainer!
- So we start walking, and we get over to the portion of the park that we could see from our airbnb. But it's just a fence, I didn't account for where the entrance actually was.
- So when we get to this fence, we can go right or left, I see nothing but construction on the right, and the flow of traffic on the left. So I say, "Alright! We're going left!"
- Now...I COULD HAVE looked it up...but dad always said, the most important thing about making a decision is that you make one. Now that's good advice to live by, but this time, I made the wrong decision.
- As you can see, here is a map **(PIC 1)** of Hershey park. Here is the entrance. This is where we walked up **(PIC 2)**. If we turned right, we would have gotten to the entrance in 5 minutes. Instead we turned left **(PIC 3)** and ended up walking almost 2 hours **(PIC 4)** around this 161 acre park!
- The longer I walked, the more my blood boiled because I could see the park, and the people laughing a playing, and riding the rides, but I can't get in!
- When we originally planned to get to the park around 3pm, we didn't get there till a little after 5pm! And when I got to the ticket booth, the lady tells me they're not selling day passes anymore.

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- And right before I lose my Ever-Living mind, she explains that they have sunset passes, that are half-price. “Oh, ok, that’s awesome.”
Turned to everyone else and said, “Aren’t you glad we took the long way!” They just looked at me to say, “Shut up! We HATE you!”
- But then the more we walked inside the park, the more we realized that most everybody is leaving. Because they had been there since 9am, they’re exhausted, the kids are cranky, so now they’re leaving to go get dinner and go home.
- So for us, there’s no lines. I love it when there’s no lines! So we got to experience everything that took those people ALL day to do, in a fraction of the time.
- If we would have gotten to the park when we expected to, we would have been fighting lines and crowds and not been able to do half of what we wanted to do.
- But because of the torturous walk, we ended up having a much better park experience than

we thought we would have. Now, the walk to get there was still frustrating, don’t get me wrong.

- But I think that’s a picture of what it takes to walk by faith sometimes. Because when we walk by faith, very rarely, IF EVER, do things go according to our plan or our timeline.
- If I’m going to be honest, Living by faith can be VERY frustrating at times, and one of the main reasons why its so frustrating is because more often than not...

- FAITH MAKES YOU WAIT

- We’ve seen this throughout scripture so far if look back in the book of Genesis:
 - Abraham: Waited 25 years before his promised son was born
 - Jacob: Had to work 14 years to get the wife that he wanted
 - Joseph: Waited 22 years to be reunited with his family and fulfill his purpose

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- Joshua: Had been working as Moses' right hand man for 38 years before he assumed leadership
- Now, here's where we go wrong:
 - Many people will read this and talk about this and say, "If you just continue walk by faith, your time will come, and God will elevate you to a high position of leadership, that he's prepared for you since the beginning of the world!"
 - Now that sounds good, it preaches good, you might get an applause, but it's horrible theology
 - *None of this is about a man getting elevated to a position, it's about God providing for His people*
 - Joshua is not the hero of this story, God is
 - Abraham and Joseph were not the heroes of their stories...God was
 - God was the one who allowed a 100 year old man be the father of millions
- God was the one who put Joseph in the palace and saved an entire race
- God was the one who brought the Israelites out of Egypt, and God was the one that is going to bring them into the promised land
 - But they had to wait on it
- Mainly faith makes us wait because we have a tendency to make everything about ourselves
 - It's about me getting to the next level, it's about me assuming leadership, it's about me living out my destiny
- Coming to Faith is coming to the understanding that you are NOT the hero of your own story.
 - You can never be the fulfillment of your own life
 - *Which is why Jesus tells us if you want to be great, you need to become the least*

- *If you want to be first, you need to put yourself last*
- *The highest position that you should try to obtain is that of a servant*
- So often we're told to WAIT on the Lord because if I WAIT on Him, there is no confusing who is really in charge
 - I need to come to the understanding that I am not the captain of my own ship, I am not the hero in my story
 - I am hopeless and broken and selfish without Him, so I need to get out of His way and take my cue from Him
- Because ONLY with Him, do I have Hope, Healing, Purpose, and Direction in this life.
- One of the main reasons why Faith makes you wait, is because....
- **FAITH TEACHES YOU TO FOLLOW**
 - We see when God told Moses to lead the people to the Land He promised to Abraham,

and Moses says, I'm only going if you're going!

- ***"If Your presence will not go with me, do not bring us up from here."* -Exodus 33:15**
- Moses had come to the understanding that the only way that He could effectively lead those people was by following God.
- Joshua, as he was Moses' right hand man for almost 4 decades, didn't just sit around and wait for his time of leadership to come
- He actively served. He was serving Moses, he was serving the people, because ultimately he was serving God.
 - *Whenever Moses needed someone to go to battle against Amelek, he sent Joshua,*
 - *Whenever Moses was going up the mountain to meet with God, Joshua went with him.*
 - *When Moses would go into the tent of meeting, Joshua would guard the door.*

- The only way that Joshua could be equipped for any sort of leadership is because he had learned how to follow
- Now that he had more responsibility, he was going to understand that he needed the presence of God more than ever!
- This is why in chapter 1, God knows that it is necessary to settle Joshua's spirit
- He tells him, ***"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. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, just as I promised to Moses. -Joshua 1:2-3***
 - God is making it very clear that HE is the one in charge and in control.
 - Joshua is going to understand that this isn't about him taking, it's about God giving
 - *He can be confident BECAUSE God is in Control*

- *And the only Power he has, comes from His Presence.*
- ***"...Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous,"***
 - Why does God have to tell him to be strong and courageous? because he, by himself, is weak and afraid.
 - I don't know if you understand, but...
- **FAITH IS SCARY**
 - I have heard many people say that fear is the opposite of faith. I don't necessarily agree with that statement.
 - You see, fear is a feeling, a natural feeling that God created. Feeling are never wrong or sinful, until you allow those feelings to have power over your life.
 - *What we need to understand is that fear is an indicator, not a dictator.*

- God wants to build your faith in such a way, that fear no longer dictates your actions. He wants to build your faith so that feelings no longer keeps you from obedience.
- Fear is not the opposite of faith because, faith will come with the feeling of fear. When God tells you to step out in faith, more often than not it will scare you to death!
- This is why God has to tell Joshua, 3 TIMES in chapter 1,
 - In **V.5-6**, “...I will not leave you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous.
 - **V.7 Only be strong and very courageous,**
 - **V.9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened,**
- Why does God tell him to not be frightened? BECAUSE HE’S SCARED!
- He may feel fear, but he doesn’t have to live in fear, why? Because
- **... the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9 ESV**
 - There’s someone that needs to hear that today.
 - Life might be scary and the thought of living by faith may be terrifying
 - Well you’re in good company!
- You may be reading “Be strong and Courageous,” and you think I have no idea how to do that when I feel so scared, anxious, stressed out all the time
 - *Faith is not the absence of fear, faith is looking fear in the face and following God anyway*
 - God calls us to scary things, and more often than not, he does that to prove to us that He is with us, that He is in control, He has the power, and that we can’t do any of it without Him

- The first thing God has Joshua do, is lead the people out to the Jordan River
 - On the other side of this river was Jericho, a fortified city built on the land that God had promised the Israelites
 - Jericho strategically built their city near this river because it served as another line of defense from invaders
 - Especially at this time, this would not have been a peaceful river, because verse 15 of chapter 3 tells us that this was the time of harvest
 - So at this time all of the snow from Mount Hermon would have melted and flooded down to the river and made it 14 feet higher and 100 feet wider than the river normally was.
- Joshua sends out the priests with the ark of the covenant ahead of everyone, and he is leading about 2 million people toward this river where they can hear the raging rapids from a long way off
 - If I'm Joshua, I'm thinking, "Ohhh this better work"
 - As they step closer and closer to this raging-overflowed river, questions undoubtedly begin to arise.
 - But as they are following the the Ark of the Covenant, the people see the priest make their way to the banks of the river
 - The first two step in...nothing happens
 - The next few step in...nothing happens
 - But the priests keep on going, and the people have to be thinking, "they're going to drown! They're walking to their death!"
 - Then the last 2 priests step in the waters, and they hear something off in the distance
 - Nothing seems to be changing but after a couple of minutes, they begin to notice that waters receded a little bit
 - And then more and more over time the waters get lower and lower

- *Because what happened, is that once all the priests stepped the soles of their feet in the water....very far away, the waters coming down from the mountain stood and rose up in a heap, and the other waters flowing down from the connecting sea were completely cut off.*
- So the water continued to receded more and more until *eventually* the priests were standing on dry ground.
- ***Now the priests bearing the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood firmly on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan, and all Israel was passing over on dry ground until all the nation finished passing over the Jordan. -Joshua 3:17 (ESV)***
- Now I remember God telling Joshua, *“Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you.”*
 - God also, proves once again, that He’s in Control, He has the Power, and His Presence will never leave them or forsake them
- But let’s not underestimate the walk toward the river, because that was scary!
 - This is why when I hear people say, “Well if it’s what God wants me to do, I’ll have a peace about it...”
 - “What?? Who told you that?? Where in the Bible did you ever read that??”
 - I see Paul talk about a peace that surpasses understanding to a church that is enduring extreme poverty, affliction, and persecution
 - And here, I see God tell his people to walk toward a flooded, raging river
- Why? Because Faith is Scary!
- Faith is scary because we don’t see the end result
 - And the peace normally doesn't come until after we step out in faith
- *More often than not, faith looks like us being the child at the edge of the pool...*

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- Maybe we could step out with a little more confidence next time!...but probably not
- I remember back whenever I was in my last semester of college, I felt very strongly that I was to pursue a career in ministry. And I was looking for youth pastor jobs all over Greenville, SC but none of the churches would even consider me because I wasn't married and I didn't have a seminary degree.
- The closer I got to graduation the more I was involuntarily throwing up like 4 or 5 times a day because my body couldn't handle the stress that I wasn't used to
- Then a few months after graduation I got the opportunity to take a youth pastor position at a small portable church in Shelby, NC for a combined salary package of ZERO dollars a year.
- But I went in faith, got a job working with my man Chavis Sims at the local minimum wage, but the Lord was faithful, and I was able to work a few different odd jobs for a

few years until the church grew enough to the point where I could be brought on full time. I bought a house, got a wife, and things were good!

- Then Rachel and I begin to feel the pull toward church planting, and you think I would go into it with confidence seeing how faithful the Lord was before. But it was scary to venture into something unknown after being so comfortable with a \$600 mortgage payment!
- And whenever we were in the midst of the house hunt for up here I was in staff meeting one day in shelby and rachel sent me a very menial text about something so simple in the house hunt, and all of the sudden my vision started going in and out, my heart was going 1000 mph, and breathing got really short, and I just had to stare at the table, ride out the rest of the meeting and then go sit on the floor of Cassie Dill's office while she calmed me down

- But again the Lord was faithful, He got us a house against all odds, and then the very weekend we move in, Rachel finds out that Fletcher is coming!
- And I don't know exactly where each of you are on your faith journey but's not gonna be long until God calls us to step out in faith again into something that's scary, and sometimes, frankly, doesn't make much sense. Because not only is faith scary...
- **FAITH IS CONFUSING**
 - Now that God has brought the Israelites across the Jordan, next on the list is to get the people off of the land that God promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
 - Chapter 6 starts off explaining that the people of Jericho were shut up in the walls of their fortified city, because they knew the Israelites were coming
- And the Lord said to Joshua, ***“See, I have given Jericho into your hand, with its king and mighty men of valor...”***
 - “Yea, that’s right, here we go...its battle time!”
- ***You shall march around the city, all the men of war going around the city once. Thus shall you do for six days...On the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times -Joshua 6:2-4 (ESV)***
 - Really? That’s our battle plan? This isn’t the way battles normally go!
- But God seems to have a pattern, of not having a pattern
 - Rea Sea/Jordan River
 - Moses and the rocks
 - Exodus 17: Strike
 - Numbers 20: Speak

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- Moses got caught up thinking, “Well last time I hit the rock and that worked, so I’m gonna do that again...and because of his disobedience Moses doesn’t get to go to the promised land
- Jesus’ Miracles
 - I think Jesus was intentional about this, because He knows that we would try to read these accounts and try to develop a system from it.
 - But we can’t put a system on God, and we cannot manufacture His movement, we just have to follow Him through faith and obedience
- God is a Creator not a Duplicator
 - In Joshua’s previous battles, he is used to being on the front lines, he is an experienced warrior
 - But Joshua needed to know that his experience, skill, and strength WAS NOT what would bring him victory. Obedience and Faith would
- Joshua is ready for his first battle as the named leader and prove himself, and he’s got all of his warriors around, he’s geared up for battle, ready to fight! And God says, “Nah, walk around the city.”
 - I think less about Joshua, and more about the soldiers. Joshua tells them to gear up, march, and don’t make a sound. They just get all suited up for battle, get all hyped up, and then just walk around the city.
 - It was only about 10 acres in diameter, so it doesn’t take long to walk around the city one time...and then they were done for the day
 - Goes home to wife...
 - Day 2, again, they get all geared up, head out to battle, and they do it all over again
 - Then Day 3, Day 4, Day 5, Day 6

- And its not like they see any progress any of those days, they don't see the walls shake, bricks falling or anything!
- *They just continue to see 40 plus foot impenetrable walls*
 - I'm not sure what they were thinking, but I probably would have gotten more and more discouraged everyday
 - I'm not seeing progress, and I don't see a way in...the longer I walk around these walls the more awesome and intimidating they seem
- ***Hebrews 11:30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days.***
 - This faith was confusing, it was probably got scarier everyday, and it was definitely making them wait!
 - But I love that God was intentional about making them wait 7 days, and on the 7th day, walking 7 times
- Because in the Bible, 7 is the number of Completion.
- And God wanted their Complete Devotion and to show that He was Completely in Control
- I also love that God tells them to Shout before the walls fell.
- ***And at the seventh time, when the priests had blown the trumpets, Joshua said to the people, "Shout, for the Lord has given you the city...So the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpet, the people shouted a great shout, and the wall fell down flat..."Joshua 6: 16, 20***
 - The term for shout was the same term that is used in Psalms when we are told to give a shout of Praise!
 - We don't just praise in response to an outcome, we shout in praise because even

if I am scared and confused, He is still
Good, He is still God, He is still in Control

- *Faith looking like circling...*

- *“God I know You brought me here for a reason, I know You gotta be working somehow, but I don’t see it. I’m a little confused right now, what I expected doesn’t seem to be happening, but I know that You’re Good, I know that You’re God, I know that You’re in control, and even if I can’t see it I know that You’re working things out for my good and You’re glory. So I’m just gonna Praise You, because I know who You are and I know what You’ve promised*

- And you’re probably going to look crazy to a lot of people...but one theologian once said:

- ***“Faith is not an irresponsible step into the unknown, but a reasonable obedience to the will and word of a sovereign, almighty God.”-Peter Jeffery***

- I know God is Sovereign, I know God is Almighty, so I’m gonna step in faith, and I am gonna give a shout of praise

- In the midst of my struggles,

- In the midst of my addiction

- In the midst of my family problems

- In the midst of my confusion

- And the more I praise, the more things get put into perspective, the less I live in fear, and the more God’s glory is shown in my life.

- A step of faith will never make sense until you take it, if it made sense it wouldn’t take faith, but you still have to choose to take the step because...

- Faith may be scary, it may be confusing, and it may make you wait, but at the end of the day...

- **FAITH IS A CHOICE**

- Its an everyday choice....they had to make the choice everyday for 7 days

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- No matter what walk of life you come from, we can all admit that we have all felt at one point or another that something is missing
- We have tried to fill a void in our lives... substances or success or so many other ways
- Eventually we come to the point where we realize that none of that works, we're still empty, we're still lacking, because what we're searching for is purpose, for meaning, to understand why we are on this planet
- Why are we here, where are we going, what are we supposed to do?
- And all of those answers, I believe with all of my being are found in the God who created you, who knew you before He formed you in the womb, you made you for a specific purpose
 - Only the One who created life can give purpose to that life
 - The only way to truly know who you are is to know who your Maker is
 - The One who's Image you were created in
- But the choice is yours
 - Even at creation, God never forced anyone to follow Him or love Him
 - He always gave a choice
 - The tree...
 - Why? Because there is no love without a choice, and He is not after a group of mindless subordinates, He is after a loving relationship with sons and daughters
- Which is why Joshua comes before the people after all of the Promised Land had been settled, and says ***“Now therefore fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day***

whom you will serve... But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”- Joshua 24:14-15 ESV

- Then all the people get hyped up and say, “Far be it from us that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods, for it is the Lord our God who brought us and our fathers up from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery... Therefore we also will serve the Lord, for He is our God.”

- But Joshua said to the people, “You are not able to serve the Lord, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions or your sins. If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you, after having done you good.” -Joshua 24:19-20

- Well that’s depressing
- This is like the worst hype speech of all time

- *Like a halftime speech...*

- But Joshua wasn’t just talking to these exact people in front of him, because we actually see that this generation of people served the Lord faithfully, but he knew that eventually their people would forget the Lord and serve other gods again
 - Then God would have to exile them, and save them again, then they would repent and serve Him, and then forget Him again and the cycle would go round and round and round
 - Almost every book in the OT ends on a depressing note
 - Because the law, the promised land, the kings, the judges, the prophets wasn’t where the hope was
- The True Hope would enter the world about 1300 years later in the true and better Joshua
 - The Hebrew name Joshua, means, “Yahweh is Salvation,” and when translated into the

Greek, the language of the New Testament, we get the name Jesus.

- And Jesus would go out and set His feet in the same Jordan River when He was baptized
- Instead of the waters opening, the Heavens would open, the Holy Spirit would descend upon on Him like a dove, and the Father would speak saying “This is My Son, with Whom I Am well pleased.”
- And just like Joshua led a shout at the walls of Jericho, Mark 15:37 says that Jesus cried out with a loud voice on the cross
 - And just like the walls of Jericho, the Temple Veil would come crashing down, showing that the walls that sin had built up in separation between us and God would be flattened
- So that now, ANYONE who calls upon the Name of the Lord will be saved

- So that now, anyone can choose this day, who you will serve
 - Just like Joshua told the people, we do not have the capacity within us to serve Him faithfully and completely
 - That’s why we need Grace, that’s why we need Mercy, that’s why we needed a Hero, and that’s why Jesus came
 - To do for us what we could never do for ourselves, to fight the battles we could never win, to give us the life we were created to live
- All we have to do is choose Him
- *What does it take to live by faith?*
 - It’s everyday making the choice.
 - Choosing to Remember the Cross
 - Choosing His ways over my ways
 - Choosing to Wait on Him
 - Even when it’s Scary and Confusing, choosing to Follow Him

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- Choosing to make Him Lord of every area of my life
- *Because He is either Lord of all, or He is not Lord at all*