



# Joshua

life in transition

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Joshua: Life in Transition

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## Introduction to Joshua

I have reached an interesting time of life. It is a time of transition and searching related to what happens as one approaches the end of responsibilities in what they have been doing. This major shift can happen for different reasons. A key reason is when the last child moves out of the house. Another, which mainly affects women, is the change that happens as their bodies go through menopause, and the possibility of having children ends. One of the most significant transitions happens when one changes what they are doing either because they quit one job to take on another, relocate or retire from a job or activity due to age or lack of physical capacity.

As the body ages, its ability to accomplish certain types of physical activity diminishes. This will result in the need to adjust the level at which a person can participate. They no longer can compete or participate with younger and stronger individuals. At the other end of the spectrum, there are types of activities that they will be better able to accomplish than before. This is because of the accumulation of practice and repetition involved. I will let you consider what types of skills may be in that category. Two I can think of are sewing and wood working. Such abilities become more and more refined and easier to accomplish. But in time, of course, we will see a diminishing capacity here as well.

One of the most complicated is when one faces major changes due to reaching a specified age called retirement. It is complicated because, though the body may have a diminished capacity, the mind may actually be able to do more and accomplish more because of the years of experience gained. It can be very frustrating to experience this shifting environment and understand one's place in the world they have known and been involved in, and to accept their place in that same world when the conditions are changing.

Joshua was at such a point. His world was changing dramatically. He was moving from being the leader's assistant to becoming the leader. Moses had died. The mantle had been passed to him. The book of Joshua starts with this transition and closes with another transition where he is told the work is not done, and he is to transition out of his role as leader. This does not mean he no longer had work to do or a part to play in all that was happening. What it means is that he had to understand how to handle transition and continue to be who God had called him to be, his chosen instrument to guide the people. A roll that he continued to fill until his death.

I find myself in a time of transition. I am at what is called the age of retirement and am trying to understand what it means to move from one type or level of service in God's kingdom to another period or type of service. Join me as I explore the different aspects of transition and the lessons God has for a person in a time of transition.

## Joshua 1 – The Jordan

Joshua decides he needs to take a walk and ponder what is happening. He needs some alone time with his thoughts and an opportunity to query God about what lies ahead. So he begins to walk. No one notices, because that is who Joshua is. He has stood watch on the mountain while God gave Moses the Ten Commandments. He has stood watch at the tabernacle while Moses met with God. He is always watching and ready for whatever directions he will be given. So nobody notices or thinks that what he is doing is out of the ordinary. But this time, it is different. Moses is gone, and he is now in charge.

His usual place of waiting no longer exists, so instead, he finds himself wandering. He wanders through the camp, past the tabernacle, past all of the tents, until he finds himself standing by the bank of the Jordan and staring towards the other bank. He knows he is to cross over and begin the conquest of the land. He knows he is now in charge, but the river is at flood stage. It is turbulent, much like his soul, as he wanders its banks. He is seeking clarity for what lies ahead.

How often do we find ourselves in a similar place. Something has changed in our life. We are no longer just followers, but we are now needed to lead in some way. It is assumed we will take on new responsibilities and we will know what the Lord expects of us. We are expected to understand what lies ahead and what needs to be done. That also means we are able to give direction to those who depend on us.

But how many of us face such decisions in our lives? Not many of us will be taking over leadership of a nation or being appointed to lead in a major undertaking. Yet most of us will face times of change and decision. We will find ourselves wandering and coming to a Jordan. Each time we approach that time of change and the need to make decisions, the river seems to have swollen larger and become more turbulent, which is further unsettling and makes us wonder if we will be able to make the right decision, or simply fail to do so and find ourselves trapped, unable to move.

Truthfully, at some point in our lives we will face a Jordan. A place where we are expected to leave the past behind and cross some kind of barrier to enter a new phase in our lives. The reality is that we are likely to face more than one such time, where we must make critical decisions that will affect our lives and the lives of others around us.

I am currently facing such a time. It is not the first time. There have been many, and each has been unique. They are never the same but always require the same process.

First, there must be a clear understanding that there is a need to make a change.

There are many reasons this may happen. Life is just like that. It creates these situations, because we change and the world around us changes, and we need to adapt to these changes. People around us can create the need for change. We get married, we have children, we change jobs, we move. All of these create times of transition and the need to leave something behind to enter what lies ahead. Sometimes they are simple, sometimes they are complicated. Like the difference between moving across town as opposed to moving to another part of the world. Handled properly, we will

be able to grow and help others to grow with us. If mishandled, we will bring harm to ourselves and to others.

Of course, there are the transitions that are created by God. God expects us to be ready to be in transition and go where he sends us and do what he expects us to do. Again, these transitions orchestrated by God can be as simple as learning to help to a new neighbor or as difficult as showing kindness to an enemy. From going across the street to experiencing another language and culture.

And so, I find myself standing along the Jordan and staring across it, wondering what lies on the other side and what it will take for me to cross the turbulent waters that I know may be ahead. God does not always part the waters or calm the storm. That would be nice, but sometimes we have to learn to swim, or to walk on water if you will. A frightening concept when the storm is raging around you.

The current transition involves the process of retiring. I truly do not know what that word means. I cannot imagine sitting back in a rocking chair and simply watching the river flow past me while watching others tackle the currents and eddies. I must be involved, but what does that mean? I, like Joshua, have been slowly wandering through the camp, observing the people, walking by the tabernacle and remembering all that has happened. I have been reviewing all the Lord has asked me to do and now I stand on the shores of the Jordan. I know I must continue to serve, that is what I have been called to do. But what will that service look like, what will it involve, who am I called to serve? ...and on the questions flow.

As Joshua stands there, he finds he is not alone. There is someone with him. The text tells us the Lord has come to speak to Joshua. It starts with the obvious.

The past is now in the past. That makes so much sense, but this statement is so important. To avoid going forward, we often hold on to the past. It is more comfortable, more predictable. We already know how things work and what our role is. The Lord states the obvious but also uses that past to let Joshua know what to expect. He states that, just as he was with Moses, he will be with Joshua. You can expect me to keep my promises, just as Moses did.

Now comes the point. Have I been walking with God? Have I seen how he has kept his promises to me and to others? Can I make the shift from all the past and apply it all to the future into which God is leading me?

These are important questions, and if we have been walking with God or truly seeking to do so, then we already know the answers. We already know that we can depend on God's promises. We know he will continue to keep them. We already know that no matter what is on the other side of the river, God will be with us and nothing can prevent us from doing what God has called us to do.

Now comes the famous text we have all memorized and teach others to memorize, "Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law." This is followed by a series of expansions on what this means.

1. *Do not turn to the right or the left.* There are no shortcuts or optional paths to follow. There are no paths that will make the trip simpler, easier, or faster. There is only one path and it alone will make it possible to do what God has called me to do. Only that way leads to success.
2. *Meditate on the law day and night.* The only way I can avoid mistakes and misdirection is by being constant in my readiness to hear God's direction. That is only possible by committing myself to knowing God's Word. This is not merely memorizing words but digging into them, exploring their hidden treasures, and carefully practicing God's law. It is only by constant plumbing of the Word that I will begin to understand the depth of the truth contained within.
3. *Be strong.* This phrase introduces this section, but it is repeated. Why the repetition? Be strong. So how does one become strong? It is by constant repetition. It is by continuing in the process. You lift weights again and again to become strong. You keep "doing" to maintain your strength. This same process applies to all areas of life. If you are constant in the process, you will gain the strength needed and be able to maintain it. Emotional strength, spiritual strength, relational strength, leadership strength all work this way. Be strong. You have been in training and the need is to continue doing what you have been doing to maintain the strength you have been given.
4. *Be courageous.* This makes sense. Of course, I will need to be courageous, I am about to face the unknown. But like the phrase, be strong, courage is not gained overnight. Joshua has been tested and tried. He has led the people in battle in the past. So, be courageous, not because you don't know what this means, but because step by step you have learned how to be courageous. Step by step, God has worked in your life to provide you with the courage you will need. Use that experience to cross the Jordan and enter the new land.
5. Finally, *do not be terrified; do not be discouraged.* Why these phrases? It is because the Jordan changes nothing. It is only another challenge, another opportunity for the Lord to demonstrate what you already know. He is with you and will continue to be with you. The river Jordan, even at flood stage, changes nothing. No challenge, no change, nor new world to enter, changes anything about this truth. God is with me.

Joshua listens and promptly tells everyone to get ready. They see the evidence of God's leading in his manner, his confidence, and his readiness to obey the Lord and lead them across the Jordan. They respond and repeat the words. As you lead us, be strong and courageous.

I am going to cross this river. I have nothing to fear. It will involve change. It will involve new challenges. But in truth, nothing has changed. God is with me. I have his Word to guide me. If I am obedient and go where he sends me, then whatever the Jordan is, and no matter how great the change is, I will be victorious. God has shown me that I can be strong, and I can be courageous because, as always, he is with me. I have but to listen to his word and obey his direction, and I will have everything I need to be strong and courageous.

## Joshua 2 – Lay of the land

So here we are, standing on the banks of a swollen river. We are supposed to cross the river in spite of the fact that it is at flood stage and growing. We are standing here and there are two questions in our mind. The first is obvious, how do I get to the other side? I may not be too worried about that issue if I take time to pause and reflect on the past. Moses parted the Red Sea, and the people crossed on dry ground. If that could happen then what is a small river by comparison?

The second question relates to wanting to know what is on the other side of the river. Actually it is a whole bunch of questions like where will we find water, food, and a place to camp? Questions related to where the enemy is located and where the roads are, and on the list could go.

We do much the same thing when we are planning a trip. We want to know where we can find fuel for our vehicle. We also could want to know where to stay, where the rest areas are and any number of things. Today it is easy to get such information. We have the internet, google maps and many other resources. We have them, because somebody did the work of spying out the land and then creating the resources to help others as they traveled.

There is one other source that can be very useful. It is a person who has already been there and can give you an idea of where things are and what to expect. When I travel, I use this kind of source on a regular basis. I prefer talking to a person over depending on other resources. Sometimes I know who this person is, and other times I have to go through a process of finding this person. Usually with the help of others.

So Joshua sends out his spies and tells them to map out the land and to give special attention to Jericho. It is a powerful and well protected city. He wants to know what to expect and what it will take to conquer it. It means delaying any decisions until he has the information he feels he needs. Often we do the same thing. Delay decisions until we have what we think we need to move forward.

All appears normal and correct. What is unusual is where they end up...in the house of a prostitute. I would love to know the reasoning for this. Did they think that as strangers this would be the last place anyone would think to find them? Did she approach them and indicate that she would help them? So many questions...but they entered her house and they found an unexpected source of critical information. It is not stated how long they stayed. So many questions and so few answers. But back to the point.

We all will find ourselves standing on the shore of our decision. We all want to find out what lies ahead. All too often we need help in knowing what is ahead. We look for our own spies, so to speak. People who can go and bring back information to fill the gaps in what we know. Information that will help us know when to move, where to go, what to expect.



What we don't know is how the information will be obtained. All too often the information we need will come from unexpected sources. Would you have expected the spies to find a useful source in a prostitute? Would you consult the unknown to learn about the known?

We have our normal sources. We go to the Word of God. We go to trusted friends. We go to key leaders. But what if they have not been where we are going? What if they don't know any more than we do? Also, the Word of God doesn't tell me anything about the specific details of my world. That is not what it is there for. It is there to do what the prostitute did.

I am sitting here wondering why this story is here. What did the prostitute give them that they had not learned as they spied out the land?

It is quite simple. She reminded them that all they had learned really did not matter. What mattered is what God was doing. She reminded them that God had gone before them to prepare the way for the battle ahead. The people were trembling in fear. They could choose any road, any place to camp. The people had abandoned their fields to hide in the city. Everything they would need was already waiting for them. They simply had to believe that God was with them. That is all they needed once they crossed the Jordan.

I recently read a biography of Dr. Livingston, who gave his life in this very process. He surveyed a great region in Southern Africa to help bring a halt to the slave trade in South Africa and open the region to the gospel. It was a very interesting story of one man's quest to help others come to work and live in a very challenging part of the world. His work would allow others to make the transition to living in that part of the world. God used him to prepare the way for others to come and conquer a land in the name of the gospel.

That is the reality of dealing with transition. When you get right down to it, there are no maps, no clear landmarks, no resource available to help you see clearly what lies ahead. In fact none of what you may learn from them has any real value for doing what God has called you to do. Why is that?

That is because it is you who is about to enter a new world and a new time frame. It is your eyes and ears, and so on, that will be used to guide you. Think about it. What you see is not what others see. What you hear is not what others hear. What you feel is not what others feel. Does that make any sense to you?

Well, whether or not it does, that is the truth. The things that attract our attention and stand out are not the same as what may do the same for another person. What is a short distance or long distance will not be the same. What will affect us may not affect another person in the same way. And the level of interest or importance attached to critical items can be different, resulting in mixed and confusing signals and directions.

Again, all of that is irrelevant. What is important is one thing, God is in charge. In this chapter the spies and Joshua are reminded of this from a very unlikely source, the prostitute. She knows this truth and she risks her life to protect them and to make sure they get the message and take it back to Joshua.

On a journey today, you may take the time to consider the type of restaurant you are willing to stop at. You may think about what kind of gas station you prefer, based on how close to the road it may be to your route, and what brand it is, and if it may have a fast food store attached to it. You may think about if you can make the trip in one day or many, which will affect decisions about hotels, rest stops, and need for bathrooms. You may also think about rest stops along the way.

All of that may be important information if all you are doing is making a trip.

But I am not making a trip. I am moving into a transition in the way I live. I am being called into new territory. This is not a vacation, or an excursion that I will complete and then return to where I was. This is about leaving everything I know, all my points of reference, my normal way of living behind and going where God sends me.

By now, you may wonder what I am trying to say. It almost sounds like I am going in circles and simply repeating myself, saying the same things in different ways. You would be right. I feel like that is just what I am doing. That is what can happen to us as we stand on the shore of the Jordan and try to understand what lies ahead.

But that brings me back to the story. It is not what I would expect. It is not about where the trails are, where the water sources are, it is not about where to camp or any of the things we would expect. It is about hearing one thing and from a very unlikely source, a prostitute. It is about hearing and being reminded that God is in control and is going before me.

So in a sense, all the time spent in spying out the land and visiting Jericho have had no real value. God has already said go, trust me, be strong, be courageous, and most important trust my word. So all this other information is not that critical. What is critical is the message of the prostitute. The people have already surrendered. Your victory has already been won. The people have no heart to oppose the people of Israel.

That is what we all need, above all else. A reminder that we do not need to worry about the details of the road ahead. Truthfully, God's knowledge of all that makes anything we might learn irrelevant. It may bring some level of peace, but it can never compare to the fact that God has called us to cross the Jordan. It can never compare to the fact that God already knows everything we need to do, just act on what he is asking us to do.

Thankfully, God is not offended by our desire to know, nor our attempts to learn more. It is interesting how often he will prepare a surprise for us to remind us that he is in control of what lies ahead. In this case the prostitute Rahab, who interestingly enough becomes part of the lineage of David and thus an ancestor of Jesus. God is in control.

Again, he is not offended by my desire to know more. In this case, he used that desire to accomplish something that was not even remotely part of the thinking of Joshua: provide for salvation of a key person to God's bigger plan. Do I understand this? As I look at the swollen river, the transition ahead, God is working and will be using all I do to follow his leading to carry out more than I can even imagine.

It is alright to want to know. It is alright to explore what lies ahead. It is alright, as long as I remember who is in control, and I don't let my desire to know hinder my readiness to go, even when I don't have all the information I think I need.

## Joshua 3 – What is next?

So when all is said and done. When you've done all your research about what lies ahead. When you realize that nothing you learn really matters. What is next?

The Jordan is still in front of you. It is still at flood stage and is turbulent and dangerous to cross. The other side is still filled with the unknown. So what is next?

Joshua has received the report. More importantly, he has heard the message the spies bring from the prostitute, and he has agreed to the terms for her safety. He realizes it is time to move. Only one thing really mattered, and it has been confirmed. God is going before them, and the unknown is not unknown to him. So what is next?

We do this. We review and we review. We check the sources. We listen to what others have learned. We hear the clear message. And ask what is next?

Well to be honest, there is no "what is next?" It is time to choose. Will I believe God? Will I be strong? Will I be courageous? Will I obey the words of the Lord? Which is to say, have I studied them, meditated on them, and heard what they tell me? The only thing that is next is to choose if I will obey the Lord.

So Joshua tells the people to get ready. It is time to cross the Jordan. Note that it is not until this moment that the Lord tells him what is next. It is not until they are ready and moving forward that God gives the directions Joshua needs, and they are a bit of a surprise.

The Jordan will not part with the wave of a staff as the Red Sea did for Moses. They will have to commit themselves in an act of faith. The word is to get wet first and then see what happens. The priests are told to pick up the ark and just start walking into the turbulent waters of the Jordan. Until they commit themselves, then nothing will happen.

This is so true of transition. We all too often are waiting for another sign or something to happen before we take even one step forward. We want the door to be open and visibly open before we take a chance on the "what is next?" Sometimes God will do that. He will place before us an open door. Then at other times, he will test us and see if we are ready to obey him and trust that the door will open at the right moment.

Can you imagine what was going through the minds of the priests carrying the ark? I am sure they are a bit uncertain about the instructions. Maybe they are even a bit frightened. The river is dangerous. The water is moving and swirling. I could lose my footing and be carried away. The priests at the front are probably the most nervous. They have to wait until everyone is standing in the water before anything happens.

I am also wondering how long they had to stand there before things began to change. It says the waters stood up at the town of Adam which was not where they were planning to cross. That town was many miles upstream. It would take a while before the effect of the water being blocked there to have any effect on the water level where they were standing.

So the “what’s next” is a bit disconcerting. I have to commit myself to where God is calling me, and I will have to make a commitment that lasts long enough for me to see things happen and the way opens to move forward. I am standing on the edge of transition. I have to move forward not knowing how I will get from here to there. I have to trust that God will do something to open the way but only after I have committed myself and willingly taken the risk to get moving. I have to enter the unknown before God will reveal the way forward.

This is not comfortable. This is stressful. The fact that I have to deal with change is already adding stress to my life. Now I have to be strong, be courageous, and most important be obedient when everything is making that difficult. My life is comfortable here. The transition is turbulent and unsettling. I want a bridge, a ferry, a calmer path. That is how we are. Admit it, we don’t like to take risks when we don’t know what will happen next.

We so quickly forget the message that has been given. I will take care of you. You will be victorious. God has already subdued, prepared everything for you. All we see is the turbulent water of change and are afraid to simply get going forward.

Have you ever had to say goodbye to someone knowing that you may never see them again? You find all kinds of excuses to delay the inevitable moment of actually leaving. You find another thing to talk about, another memory to share. You hug them again and they hug you again which means you have to hug them back. You need to do this and that as if it really mattered. But it doesn’t, because you are leaving and not coming back.

Further it doesn’t matter how exciting what lies ahead is. It is always hard to move forward.

You see, I am even doing it here as I write. Finding ways to delay moving forward. I want to add another word, another idea, because I don’t want to come to the end and just step into the water and see what happens next.

Finally, I take one step. Nothing happens and so I get a little nervous. I take another step and now I start to worry because nothing seems to be happening. I take another step and now my fear is growing. Another step, and I am confused. I thought God was going to do something. Finally, I am all the way in, and that is when I see something happen.

Imagine again with me how the priests are feeling. It is not until they are all standing in the Jordan that a change begins to occur. The water slowly recedes and so they take another step and another until they find themselves standing in the middle of the river and the people are crossing.

I am in a time of transition. I have no idea what lies ahead, but nothing will happen until I move forward. I can’t stay where I am. I could, but all the resources God has prepared for me are over there. If I don’t get going, well, life will not be as pleasant as I would like it to be.

Remember at this point, the manna has stopped being supplied. If they stay put and don't cross, they will struggle to live. All the supplies they need are over there. Everything I need lies ahead. Until I move forward, enter the Jordan and allow others to be part of my transition, then everything we need will not be available.

Oh, didn't I mention that? My transition affects others as well. And they cannot enjoy what God has prepared for what lies ahead, unless I am obedient and move forward. Do we realize this? God calls us forward and our response will always affect others. Disobedience creates a negative result. Obedience opens the way for others to join us and benefit from what lies ahead.

My crossing the Jordan, making a transition, is never just about me. It always opens the way for others to be blessed and receive what God has prepared. My obedience, my willingness to change, will make that possible, but not until I, in an act of faith, start crossing over the Jordan that lies before me.

## Joshua 4 – Monuments

Do I ever build monuments? Do I build structures to remind myself and others that I have been there?

Truthfully, I have done a lot of this in my life. I have built buildings for bible schools. I have built houses for pastors. I have built furniture for myself and others. All of them remind me and others that I have been there and successfully carried out a job or task.

This chapter is about setting up a monument. Before the priests are allowed to come up out of the river, God tells Joshua to send one man from each tribe to get a stone, because they are going to build a monument. Something that will remind the people of what God has done on that day.

They are not getting a small stone. It was large enough that they had to put it on their shoulder to carry it. It was big enough that when they were stacked, piled, or set up, there was no mistake that they had been intentionally gathered and placed there. The point of all this is that people have a tendency to forget and need reminders.

So what kind of monuments do we create so that we will remember? One of the most common is a tombstone. It is a reminder that the person buried there, at one time lived and was known to others. The only problem is that over time, unless there is a conscious effort to go and look at the stone, the person will fade into the background of history.

Another kind of monument is in the form of written records. This is mostly done in relation to people who have made significant contributions to the world or a community. Generally, nothing is written about ordinary people. Why, because to be honest there is usually nothing about their life that is any different from the life of everyone. For the most part, we all live much the same life. We are born, grow, get married, have children, and die.

Is that a sad commentary on what happens to the majority of us? So unless you do something notable or important, it is not likely there will be a monument set up or written or created to remind people of your life.

The other monument that is common is that which records what happened in a specific place in time. Buildings are preserved to remind us of critical events. Battlefields have markers set up to remind people that something significant happened there. Plaques, signs, and stones are set in place for us to see and learn what happened. Some of these are used as warnings of what happens when a disaster occurs. Along with those, the critical date is set aside to remember what has happened. I can think of a couple. One is the battleship Arizona in Hawaii. Another would be the archeological site tied to the eruption of Vesuvius.

I could go on. The point is that we spend a lot of time and effort setting up monuments, so that we will remember people, places, and events. We need these, because we have a tendency to forget. God knows this and so tells Joshua to set up a monument to this day. It has two functions. The most obvious being to remind people of what God did on that date in that place.

There is a second monument that is tied to the setting up of the stones. It is less obvious, but it is a reminder of how God confirmed Joshua as the new leader of the people of Israel. This event, the crossing of the Jordan, did just that and the monument would remind them that God had confirmed Joshua as their leader on that day. Joshua, himself, became a monument, a daily reminder to the people of what God will do when a person is faithful and obedient. In fact, the story of Joshua and his life is an important one and reminds us each time we read it about God's ability to use a person who is faithful to lead others and show them the way to follow God.

So what about me? I mentioned that I create monuments in my life. I have built buildings, created structures that remind people that I was there. Is that wrong? Is that egotistical? It can be if that is the only point, to remember me and what I did.

But if they also point to the faithfulness of God in leading people to serve and carry out the mission of God, then the monument serves a greater purpose. It is not just about a person, but about what happens when a person is obedient and serves the Lord faithfully.

There is another aspect to all monuments that are of value. They involve the action of others. The monument required the work of 12 men to go and get the stones and bring them to the spot selected for the erection of the monument. That means any monument of value, any monument that is not focused on pride and ego, requires the involvement of others.

So has God used me to create in others the willingness to participate in activities that bring honor to God and provide them with the evidence of God's presence? Has God used me to guide others and show them the way to God as well?

As I enter into this transition. As I move forward following God. Will my life and activity be a monument to me or to all that God has done over the years? Will people point to God's faithfulness and see his hand in who I am and what he has chosen me to do, then and now, as I move forward in obedience?

I can build a monument to myself. The pharaohs did this. Great people sometimes do this. And we are impressed. Some of these seem to last forever, or at least a very long time. But they do not point people to God, only them, and they are dead.

Or, I can erect something that leads people to God. I can allow God to work in my life and so be a monument of his love and faithfulness for others to see. This leads them to God and life with God.

## Joshua 5- the cost

Risk it all. Have you ever heard that phrase? What does that mean? What are some examples?

In gambling, a player will go “all in” believing that his hand is the best and will beat the hand of all the other players. He risks what he has, hoping to win the entire pot. It is a dangerous move, because he could lose it all as well.

There are many phrases that describe this concept. Here are a few:

“Go out on a limb”

“Go for broke”

“Take a chance”

They all carry the same idea. It is that unless I risk what I have, I will not gain what I want or hope for. The problem or concern is that I could lose more than I hope to gain. Or in taking the risk I also open the door for something worse to happen.

So the question is, are you willing to gamble with your life? Are you willing to risk what you have, to gain something you think is better? Are you ready to give up what you have, to possibly gain something else?

Another aspect of this is what we call a dare. “I dare you to” .... The point of the dare is to take a risk and see if you can do whatever you are being challenged to do. Again, there is always the possibility of failure or worse.

We tend to avoid all of the above for a couple of reasons. We don't want to lose what we have. We don't want to deal with the possibility of failing. Better not to try and so not fail. We are fearful. In fact, in all the reasons for not taking a risk is this element of fear.

So what is happening here with the Israelites? First they have been challenged to cross the river Jordan, even though it is at flood stage. That is a risky action. The benefit is they can finally enter the Promised Land and stop wandering. They take the risk and cross the Jordan. Can you imagine all the emotions they experienced? The wandering is over. We have arrived. Never mind they still have to fight a host of enemies. They have just participated in another miracle!

However, there is a downside to this. The manna, which they have enjoyed for the last forty years, stops. They will now have to forage for food. For a change, there is no complaining.

Then comes the real challenge and a more serious risk. Remember they are in new territory, and it belongs to a host of enemies. Now we get to the real risk. God tells Joshua that all the men who have not been circumcised need to be circumcised. This is no small challenge. It means that all of those men are going to be unable to fight, work, or do much of anything for several days.

This is a bit frightening. If the enemy understands this and attacks, there is no hope of surviving such an attack. It is a critical test of their willingness to commit themselves wholeheartedly to obeying God in everything.

For the people there is good news. The enemy is frozen in fear. This was part of the message the spies had received from Rehab. It is little wonder. The enemy had heard about the defeat of the kings west of the Jordan. They have heard the stories of what happened in Egypt. I am sure they have heard many other stories about God's protection of this people, and now they have crossed the Jordan river at flood stage on dry ground. So, if they truly remember and believe, then they will do as God asks without fear or hesitation.

So, what does this all mean for me?

It means that when I cross the Jordan, when I enter this new phase of life, I can expect to leave things behind. What sustained me in the past will not be available in the future. I will need to learn to trust God to supply what I need in this new place of service and ministry.

As I cross the Jordan, I will find myself helpless. It is what happens when one enters new places and locations. It is what happens when one changes their activities. If you change jobs, then you will be helpless until you learn how things work. If you move, you will be somewhat lost and confused, until you become familiar with the new setting and its resources.

What is important is to remember all that God has done in the past. He has defeated the enemies we have confronted. He has dealt with our fears. He has supplied what we needed, as we needed it. He has provided guides to help us as we traveled the path he has marked out.

Consider this, if he has done all of this, then he will do it all again. Only, he will do it in new and different ways. He will watch over me when I am most vulnerable. Satan, demons, and others will be incapable of acting until we have recovered and are established anew.

The key to all of this is obedience. An obedience based in faith in an incomparable God, who can supply everything we need when it is needed. All I must do is cross the Jordan and risk everything, committing myself completely and wholeheartedly to his care even when I am at my weakest. Then I will see his power and care displayed.

So, it is time to decide if I will go for it, go out on a limb, and go all in with everything I have.



## Joshua 5- the cost

Risk it all. Have you ever heard that phrase? What does that mean? What are some examples?

In gambling, a player will go “all in” believing that his hand is the best and will beat the hand of all the other players. He risks what he has, hoping to win the entire pot. It is a dangerous move, because he could lose it all as well.

There are many phrases that describe this concept. Here are a few:

“Go out on a limb”

“Go for broke”

“Take a chance”

They all carry the same idea. It is that unless I risk what I have, I will not gain what I want or hope for. The problem or concern is that I could lose more than I hope to gain. Or in taking the risk I also open the door for something worse to happen.

So the question is, are you willing to gamble with your life? Are you willing to risk what you have, to gain something you think is better? Are you ready to give up what you have, to possibly gain something else?

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So, it is time to decide if I will go for it, go out on a limb, and go all in with everything I have.

## Joshua 7 Warning! Danger ahead!

There is a danger that lies ahead. Transition opens the door for this. Especially if things are going well. Why is this? One key issue is that we don't pay attention to the instructions given. We get careless in our work, thinking we can handle whatever lies ahead. Actually, we get arrogant. So we crash and burn. Why?

Let's look at the story here. Two things are happening. One, a person doesn't follow the directions given and thinks they can do what they want and that it won't affect anyone else. That part of the story, and what happens, relates to Achan. He decides his needs are more important than obeying the instructions. This will result in God's displeasure and impact many others. Some will die because of his disobedience, including himself.

The second is about arrogance. Joshua and the leaders don't consult God and decide they can handle the next challenge on their own. That opens the door for two things to happen. One, they do not have the opportunity to learn about God's displeasure and what Achan has done. Two, they assume that everything will go forward as they believe it should. This, in combination with Achan's actions will result in the death of some of the soldiers. That doesn't seem right but ...

Both of these are serious mistakes. Together they result in the defeat of the army and a great deal of confusion. They think God has failed when, in fact, they have failed. One, and perhaps others in Achan's family, have failed to obey God. The others have failed to consult God. They have trusted in their own wisdom and abilities. They have placed God in the background and treated him as if he were irrelevant and unnecessary.

So, when they cry to him, and in a sense accuse him of failing them, God is rightfully upset. They have failed to consult him. They have failed to learn about the sin that is part of what has happened. They have failed to honor him. The result of being defeated was inevitable: failure.

This is a clear warning and a great example to keep in focus as I move forward into this new territory and all that I will be dealing with, as I enter this new time in my life.

I need to be very careful to follow clearly the Lord's direction. This means that before I assume I know what to do, I need to listen to what God has to say. I need to avoid assuming I can do what I want and have what I think I need to be able to live comfortably and enjoy life in this new phase of activity. This is an issue of self. Instead of trusting that God will provide what I need when I need it, I choose to trust myself and what I believe I need for what lies ahead.

This is about listening to God. What he says through his word, through others, and especially if the Holy Spirit speaks. I just had that happen. I was testing out a particular idea and direction, when I was clearly told not to proceed.

This is an easy trap to fall into. I have left a job that provided an income, health insurance, and I had a clearly defined budget and expenses. I am now living in a world where the source of income has changed. I need to deal with providing for my own health insurance. I am dealing with expenses that were not part of my life and work of the past. It is very easy to get wrapped up in thinking about finding other sources to supplement my income to make it possible to live comfortably and do what I want to do, or think I want/should be able to do. It is not wrong to do so. The key concern is in making such decisions purely from a financial perspective and not considering how they fit into what God wants for me.

I need to avoid assuming I know exactly what to do. This is as dangerous as the other issue. Disobeying God or disregarding God's plans and directions is a serious concern. But assuming I

can proceed without consulting God is probably even more serious. Even without Achan's sin, they should not have done this.

Even without Achan's sin they would likely have encountered a setback of some kind. Ignoring God, or assuming we know what God wants or will do, is a recipe for struggle and trouble.

These two errors were costly for the people of Israel and for the family of Achan. It is hard to imagine that Achan acted without the knowledge of his family. How does one hide all of what he took under the floor of the tent without someone seeing or knowing? We have heard over and over in scripture that God punishes those who sin and not the innocent.

The second one was not just about Achan. Achan's sin was much the same. Assuming we can act without God. That we can hide what we do or don't need God's involvement. Both involve depending on myself and my wisdom. This is something that must be avoided, and even more so as I enter the unfamiliar territory of transition.

I cannot assume that I can take or have what I want without God's permission. I cannot assume that my experience alone, past or present, is adequate to guide me in what lies ahead. I must, I must depend on God for both.

## Joshua 8 Using my failure

Are you paying attention? Am I paying attention? I have just re-read this chapter again, and I have seen something very interesting in the plan God has given Joshua. What is interesting is that the plan makes use of the impact of their prior defeat. That being the idea that Ai may now be overconfident.

The people of Ai have just defeated their feared enemy. This is something no one thought would be possible. Not just defeated Israel but watched them run away with their tails between their legs, or in great humiliation. So, on the one side, Israel is disheartened and trembling in fear. On the other side, Ai is celebrating and now overconfident in their ability to defeat this fearsome enemy.

What Ai doesn't know is that their victory was not their victory. And Israel does not know that their defeat was not because they lacked fighting skill. God has allowed this to happen in order to impress on Israel the importance of obedience and dependence on God, not themselves, for the victory.

So read the instructions and how the battle proceeds. God uses what has happened to bring about the defeat and destruction of Ai.

What about me? How often has God used my failures to orchestrate a victory? Do I even realize this is happening? If I am wise I will pay attention and learn. I will learn to listen, observe, and see how God uses even my mistakes to help me obey and carry out his directions.

As I think about this, I am aware that I have not been taught to think along these lines. Yet there are scriptures that support this idea. One of those is Heb 12:11. No discipline seems pleasant at the

time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

The failure of the past helps us learn critical lessons for the present.

But there is more in this passage. They have now won two critical battles. These battles have established the way forward, but the final conquest of the land is a long way off. Yet, it is at this moment that Joshua decides it is time to declare clearly for all of Israel, and all the land, who is in charge.

He decides that they will make a three day trip to Mt Gerizim and Mt Ebal. When Moses gave the people the law, he also gave them a set of curses and a set of blessings to be declared by the people as a form of committing themselves to God and the law. The easiest time to do this would be after the land is conquered. But what is the value in that?

The real test of loyalty and obedience is to declare it as they begin the conquest. And what better way to do so than to boldly enter the territory still under the control of the enemy, stand on the two mountains, and read the law as well as the blessings and the curses. This act cements in the hearts of the people, who they serve, and testifies to all the nations around them, who is the one true God.

It is a bold and risky move. Getting there means passing through enemy territory. Furthermore, all the people...men, women, children, and foreigners who have chosen to follow God...all must go.

This is not the act of a few brave and courageous souls. It is to be an action in which all must participate. This will not be about a small group of people recounting an adventure and how they successfully got in and out without being caught.

No, this is about everyone boldly facing the enemy, and doing so in the light of day, where everyone can see them and can hear what is being said.

I wonder what that felt like. The fear and the exhilaration. The apprehension and the triumphant joy. The wariness and boldness. I wonder.

Truthfully, if I am committed to doing what God is calling me to do. If am ready to face all that a transition involves, then at some point I will need to declare clearly for all to hear what I am doing, why I am doing it, and that God is in charge of my life.

As soon as possible, I must review the blessings and curses. As soon as possible, I must review God's word. As soon as possible, I must declare who I serve and why. There is no waiting for the right time or when it will be easy to do. This must be done now, at the beginning. It is an act of faith and is exactly what God told Joshua to do. Be strong. Be courageous. Obey and keep all my law, all my word. NOW.

## Joshua 9 – Avoiding Scams

We live in the days of scams and shams. There are people trying to make us believe that they have exactly what we need. There are people who don't care what we need or if we even get what they promise. Shams are the fakes that work at getting us to believe them. They know a little, they offer a little, but in the end, it is not enough, and it all collapses. The shamers are those selling us a line. They know they have nothing to offer. Their goal is to convince us to give them something, and then they disappear.

We all know them. The Nigerian letters. The phone calls telling us we need something or could save money with them. On the list goes. The struggle is, that in the midst of all of this, there are some who are telling the truth. There are those who do have something valuable to offer.

The issue is that we can't tell the fake from the real. We don't know who to trust, who not to trust. Most importantly, we don't have the sources or people to help us know which is which.

This chapter presents us with two threats. One was very real and preparing to attack. The other was the sham and scam. The Gibeonites, afraid of being destroyed, pulled off a great deception. They had heard of Moses' words that all the people of the land were to be destroyed, so they were looking for a way to avoid having that happen. However, they were not ready to risk a war they believed they could not win. They had seen what had happened to Jericho and Ai. They were not convinced that allying themselves with the other groups would work. In their minds, destruction was inevitable.

So, they set up the sham and it worked. They successfully deceived the leaders of Israel.

Once the deception was discovered, the leaders were rightfully upset. They had once again failed to consult God. They had once again been overconfident. They knew that such a failure could be costly. God was very clear about their need to obey him in all points. They had once again opened the door to not consulting God and were concerned.

So here I am. I am in new territory. I am in transition. I have no sources. I don't know the environment. I am a target for the shams and scams. Who do I go to for help? But before I begin the search, I need to remind myself that my past resources know as little as I do about this place and what I may be doing. Think about it. Joshua didn't send out any spies and none of the leaders knew any more than he did. He trusted them, and it went badly.

That means I need to slowly get acquainted with my new environment. I need to meet people and step-by-step learn who I can trust to help me navigate the unfamiliar world I am now in. I know the value of this because of my past history: Kempson in Sierra Leone. Alex in Guyana. I learned quickly the importance of a trusted source. Nothing has changed. I must go through that same process again.

A key part in this is remembering to place every step before the Lord and let him bring the people I need into my life. Patience is critical in this process. That may have been an issue for Joshua and the leaders. The enemy kings were gathering and threatening. They may have been worried about that more than necessary.

It is good to keep in mind that no matter what the enemy is doing, there is always time to wait on the Lord, while you do the homework critical to avoid wasting time and resources and making major errors.

## Joshua 10 – faith and action

This chapter is filled with great and wondrous information. Here is a quick list.

1. Five kings gather to attack Gibeonites. The promise made by Israel causes them to come to the defense of Gibeon. A promise made, even to an enemy, must be kept.
2. Joshua does a forced march and makes a surprise attack. God sends hailstones and more are killed by the hailstones than by the sword. What is even more interesting is that no one from Israel is even hurt by them. As a further aid to the battle, God throws the enemy into confusion. Imagine the confusion as giant hailstones start falling and you are confronted by a surprise attack.
3. Joshua calls on the Lord to make the sun and moon stand still until the battle is done. God responds and they do. An incredible act of faith. God said he would hand them over, and he does so.
4. There is one other event hidden in the story. Joshua takes only the army with him. He leaves all the women and children, and all of their possessions behind in Gilgal and sets up a new war camp in Makkedah. So God not only provides victory for the army but protection for everyone else.
5. Then begins a lightening-paced war. They move from place to place in rapid succession and destroy all the cities of the five kings of the first battle. Then they destroy another four kings and destroy their cities. By the end, it says all of that region is defeated.

No threat was too great. No place was too far. No obstacle too great. All were overcome. Some with the direct involvement of the Lord, hail and the sun and moon standing still. Others were accomplished by the army of Israel without the Lord's intervention. So much to learn from this.

First, I need not fear for the safety of those who have followed me where the Lord sends me. Whether it is my family, my friends, or others sensing they should follow and go where I am going. When God is in charge and has declared that it is time, I need not worry.

Second, God will involve himself in tangible ways when necessary. I can call on him to act. I can expect him to perform miracles, if that is what is needed. I can expect the army of the Lord to be on hand to support what I am doing. (This is not mentioned in the passage but seems to be a given, based on Joshua's encounter with the commander of God's army in chapter 4:14ff.

Third, once I understand clearly what to do, I can go forward and carry out the work God has given me. He has given me resources and skills to use and expects me to use them. Once the pattern is established, I can move forward, confident in what I am doing. Does that mean I no longer consult

the Lord? No, it does not. What it means is that sometimes the directions have a broader scope and application. Joshua was told not to fear; he would have victory over all he faced.

Three things are part of this. Joshua and the leaders had learned some valuable lessons. First, do not defy the Lord's word, as did Achan. Second, do not listen to those who are outsiders unless God approves them. Third, trust the Lord to care for everything and provide the freedom to not worry about my family, my things, and more.

## Joshua 11 – adapting

Now comes the rest of the work. The first battles were quick and over. Now the rest of the work must be done. Group after group organizes and attacks. It is hard work. It is not just about defeating an army and moving on. They must destroy the army, all the people, and many times level a city. And there is the issue of burning the chariots and permanently preventing the horses from doing anything related to war.

Day after day and year after year this goes on. What is interesting is that the Lord makes sure there is no simple path or short cut. None of the enemy even think about a treaty. Only Gibeon used this plan, and it is not repeated. The leaders have learned. The ones who might think about it don't, for one simple reason. They will be attacked by their own people and neighbors as traitors. That, and the fact that without a treaty with Israel, there will be no one to call on to defend them.

Finally, after several years of war, we are told there is peace in the land. Not that all the land has been conquered. We learn this in the chapters ahead. It may simply mean that the people living in the land no longer have the desire or heart to organize and attack. They have given up and are simply waiting for what seems inevitable: conquest and destruction. That is a guess on my part, but it seems to fit.

This is a good reminder that there may be times when success comes easily and quickly. Even after a clear set back, they encourage us but do not mean that it will always be easy. Transition is never easy. I know. There is so much to learn about everything. Culture, resources available. Relationships, and how to live in the new location. Most important, it usually takes time to learn the work to be done, get started, and build those relationships.

In time, one may finally be able to say the struggle is past. Care needs to be taken in making that claim.

This has to do with understanding the purpose of what I am doing and the goals that need to be set to accomplish the work I will be involved in.

Imagine the shifts that were needed in moving from a quick victory mentality to realizing that the battle for the land will take more time. Imagine the planning necessary to provide for the families of the soldiers. Imagine the planning needed for care of the livestock and any other area of responsibility. Imagine how the soldiers are doing, who left their families on the other side to fulfill a commitment to help their brothers gain their inheritance.



If Joshua didn't make the right plans and didn't understand the overall scope of the work, then they would have failed. If he failed to end this phase of the conquest of the land correctly, then the full conquest would not be completed and would clearly make things more complicated down the road.

So, as I transition will I see clearly what lies ahead? Will I plan properly, so that I can do what the Lord and others will expect of me? Will I develop the needed structures and resources that will allow me to reach the point of knowing that the work I have been given has been done, and others can continue from there?

So many questions.

Even as I ask the questions, I realize that I will have to answer those questions from the midst of the transition and all that is involved. If I made plans before, they may need to be subject to adaptation, change and sometimes outright rejection. That, plus the fact that I may need to be in a constant mode of being flexible in the application of those goals and overall plan.

Imagine with me the terrain where the battles are being fought. It would be unwise to assume that every battle will be fought in the same place using the same tactics. That would result in failure. If the enemy figured that out, they could use it against me. No. Different tactics are required for the varied geography, groups of people and time of year.

Battle after battle is fought. Different groups, different places, and other factors are involved.

I will likewise need to deal with each challenge and task that will face me during my transition. I need a plan, a clear idea of what is to be done. I also need to be flexible in how I move forward, so that one day I will be able to say I have succeeded in making the transition, and I can rest or hand the work over to others.

There is one more thing to keep in mind. I must provide for training that will allow those who follow me to adapt to whatever context (terrain) they will deal with. If not, and I never let them grow and have responsibility, then the process of transition will fail.

For now, the battle is in full force. If I am wise and do what is necessary, I will reach that day. May I see it clearly and do what must be done.

## Joshua 12 – Rearview mirror

So, let me ask this question. Do you enjoy reading the lists that are found in the Bible? You know, the lists of names like are found in Genesis and 1 Chronicles. The lists of genealogies, who begat who, and how long they lived before and after they begat someone. Then there are also lists of places in different parts of the Bible. If you are like me, seeing such a list and then reading it is tedious and booooooerrrrrrring.

I remember when I was a kid. Every evening after dinner was done, we would read one chapter out of the Bible. At first mom and dad did the reading, but when we became old enough and

capable of doing so, we were included in the rotation of reading that chapter. Well as fortune would have it, on one occasion the chapter I was to read was the list of people in 1 Chronicles. Now that was a challenge. And, as a young person, a total waste of time. At least then it was. I have come, over time, to change my thinking a bit over the value of those lists and taking time to go through them. I now realize that they represent a very important lesson. God knows who we are and remembers every name and history. He knows where each of us fits in history, especially in the history relating to eternity

But here we are again, with another list. However, this list is different. It is a long list of all the kings who were defeated by Joshua and the people. As I looked at the list again, and then again, I struggled with why they were here. Why did I need to review the names of the kings and places that had been defeated. I even shared this frustration with a friend, who then helped me see their value.

At some point in time, we will be at a point of transition. When that time comes there are two realities that must be kept in focus. The one is the obvious one, one that causes us concern, the unknown which lies before us. This focus can become so overwhelming that we cannot see the other reality that we must not lose sight of.

My friend helped me to be able to look forward as well as to look back. She reminded me that as we look forward, we always need to keep in mind what God has done in our lives to bring us to this point. The list of kings and places was a list of all the victories that Joshua had enjoyed during the time of the conquest. It was a reminder that even as God had provided all that was needed to gain those victories of the past, he would also continue to provide what would be needed for whatever lay ahead.

In simple terms, the list was an encouragement for me to make my own list of battles and victories. My own list reminding me of what God had done in my life in the past to prepare me for what lay ahead in my future. This would be an opportunity to consider the different times and places where God had provided in specific ways, what I had needed to carry out the tasks that I had been given over the years.

I will make a short list. Not for the purpose of boasting but as a way of remembering the faithfulness of God in the past, so that I will be able to maintain my confidence in his faithfulness for what lies in the future.

1. Rebuilding bible school in Sierra Leone.
2. Learning three languages over the years
3. Starting and building a bible school in Papua New Guinea
4. Surviving multiple bouts with malaria.
5. Learning to farm in both Sierra Leone and Papua New Guinea
6. Building a new bible school building in Guyana
7. Helping my wife start a home for children with Aids
8. Moving and learning to live in 5 different countries
9. Raising three incredible children in the midst of all that change and challenge
10. Helping a region develop their missions program

11. Learning how to travel from country to country to do teaching
12. Dealing with my wife's cancer
13. Dealing with my wife's death from cancer
14. and the list goes on.

Keep in mind these are key points where God was working, so that I could carry out a task or deal with a critical need. Each of them represents a victory over my emotions, health, abilities, and events. In all of these, God was faithful and made each of them possible.

So, this list provides us both encouragement and hope. It reminds of what God can do if we trust him and provides hope that he will continue do so, in the process of transition and in what lies ahead.

This list is also a reminder that not everything happens at once. So often what we are involved in takes time, even years, and on occasion our entire life, or at least a major portion of it. How much is involved will depend on what and when the transition is occurring. Think about these examples:

1. Transitions that happen related to change in age...moving from grade school to junior high, to senior high, to college and so on.
2. Transitions that happen because you have moved from one place to another
3. Transitions that happen due to family changes
  - a. Birth of siblings
  - b. Death of a parent
  - c. Your marriage
  - d. Birth of your children
  - e. Needs of aging parents
4. Transitions that happen related to work
  - a. Changing jobs
  - b. Changing positions
  - c. Advancement in your job
5. Transitions that relate to health
  - a. Dealing with sickness
  - b. Dealing with disability
  - c. Dealing with death

So many types of transitions. So many issues to deal with. With each transition comes a challenge and a lesson to be learned. Each transition providing skills and abilities to face the next transition that may come. Each bringing us further down the road of life and ministry that God has laid out for us. Each of them allowing for God to work and reveal himself as we continue forward. Finally, each of them providing tools and resources to face the next transition that comes our way.

So, take time to review the past. You may be surprised by what you see. Why do I say that? It is because so often we do not look at the long view of things and get trapped in seeing only what we consider to be a failure. And to be honest, in the moment we dealt with that transition or issue, that is what it felt like. It is when we do as was done by God for Joshua, that those events are put in

their proper perspective, and we can see how God uses each and every event and time in our lives to bring about a key change, key growth, key skill and so a victory that helps us continue forward.

What a blessing these lists are. They remind us of where we have been and how God has been with us all along the way. With that in mind, I am ready for the next transition that is waiting ahead. With that in mind, I need not worry about what it is, how hard it will be, or any other fear I may have. God is faithful and will remain faithful, and I will be victorious because he is the one in charge, not me.

## Joshua 13 – unfinished work

So how many of you would love to hear the words that God speaks to Joshua? The Lord tells Joshua that he is very old, and he has not finished all the work that needs to be done. I doubt that many of us want to hear that we are now very old. Getting old is no fun. We all want to stay young and healthy, able to do whatever we want, whenever we want.

Or, if you are not an old person to hear that time has run out. Run out in taking an exam, run out for applying for a job, run out for doing any number of things that have to be done in a specified amount of time or before a certain date or time is reached.

Then to hear and realize that the work is not done. I know that this is not what I would want to hear. I don't want to have someone tell me that I didn't finish all the work that needs to be done. I want to hear that I have finished the work and that those commenting are satisfied with what I have accomplished.

But that is not what Joshua hears from the Lord. Instead, he is told that his time is running out. You are very old. That is not an encouraging comment. It usually means that you have been evaluated and you no longer have what it takes to do the job. In today's world, it means you are no longer able to keep up with all the new technologies and no longer have the strength to do the work you are expected to do. Employers are now looking for younger people to do the work. People who are adaptable and will be around long enough to carry out the work given to them.

You, because you are old, do not have enough energy to keep doing the work. You do not have the ability to adjust and adapt to the changes that are part of life. Further, it is not worth investing in you, more training, more resources, and so on, because you will not be around long enough to make the investment worthwhile. To tell someone, not just that they are old, but very old, too old to keep on, is harsh.

Further, to be told that in spite of your best efforts and years of service, you didn't finish the task that was given to you. These are not the words one wants to hear, at any time in their life. Actually, though Joshua is old, the point of the matter is that the work is not done. It is not really about how old he is but that he will not be able to complete the task. This is something that could happen to any of us at any time. The boss, owner, person in charge, comes and says you have not completed the work given, and so we need to assign other people. Sometimes this also means that you will

be reassigned, or worse yet fired, so that others can take your place and finish whatever work you were doing.

Honestly, none of us wants to hear any of these comments. We don't want to be evaluated. We don't want to hear that we didn't finish the task. We don't want to hear that we will be replaced so others can do what we have left undone. We don't want to deal with transition.

What seems harsher is that not only is he told he is old and the work is undone, but he is reminded of all that was arranged by Moses beforehand. If you want to frustrate someone and discourage them, this is how to do it. Tell them they are no longer capable of doing the work, then tell them all that they have failed to do, and finally tell them about what was planned and done before they even started.

But that is what happens in transition whether we like it or not, whether someone says it out loud or not. It is always this way. You can never fully do all the work needed. There is always more to be done, and even if you think you got the assigned work finished, the reality is that what you did will reveal the fact that there is still more to do. More than you can hope to accomplish without the input of others.

Also, it doesn't matter how good you are, you will always need others to do what you cannot do. Ouch. And ouch.

So here we are, reality check, and God is revealing the truth to Joshua. Joshua, no matter how much you have accomplished, and you have done a lot, there is more to do, which is more than you can do. The reasons for this are many. Limited skills, limited time, age factors, changing world. It doesn't matter what they are, a day will come when you will no longer be adequate for a given task or no longer able to continue doing the work.

While it appears a little harsh to review what still needs to be done and what someone else did before you took over, it is always good to hear an honest appraisal of where things stand, so we can be honest with ourselves as well.

Now let me pause and start all over. I want to do so, because there is a dangerous assumption that could be affecting our ability to be told our time is up even though there is more work to be done. The assumption is that I am the one responsible for the work and for its completion. In other words, I am the one who must do it all. That is a dangerous assumption. This assumption can lead us to do more than we are capable of and or should do. This can result in damaging the ability of others to continue the work, or worse, preventing others from taking over.

Take a moment to once again read the chapter. It starts with the idea that your time is up, and it is time for others to continue the work. You have done this much, and now it is time to assign the work to others. It also includes the fact that Joshua was not responsible for all the work. Some of the conquest and assignment of the land had already been done in the time of Moses. During that time, they had defeated two kings and assigned the land to the tribes of Rueben, Gad and the ½ tribe of Manasseh. Further, a rough outline of who would settle where had already been established.

So here I am. My time for this particular work is coming to an end. I did not start the work, others did that. I was invited to share in the work for a period of time and train others to take over. That is where I am. But, like Joshua, there are things to do that are mainly related to helping others take over the responsibility for the work.

What I need to realize is that, in the end, the work all belongs to God. I have been given a great privilege to participate in what he is accomplishing. If I am wise, I will understand my place in the larger process. Why it is time to change can be the result of many different types of needs. In my case, it is helping the next generation take over the work. In other situations, it could be a need for people with other skills, other capacities, and the capacity to involve others of which I am not even aware. Whatever the reason, I need to be willing to let go and adjust my life to the changes that are occurring.

If I fight this, then everyone loses. If I delay this transition, then I could affect the ability of others to do what needs to be done, because delays can affect so many aspects of time and availability of key people and resources.

Actually, I could create any number of scenarios where I deny that it is time to transition out of a particular role or shift my focus and involvement. All of them will create unnecessary problems and confusion.

The passage doesn't say what Joshua was thinking or how he felt. What it tells, as we move forward, is that he wisely listened to God. He did what he was told to do, when he was to do it. This would later give him a great vantage point from which to watch and be able to advise, down the road.

So, yep, I am old. Yep, my time of transition has come. Yep, my role is changing. Yep, the work is not done. Yep, it is time for others to take over and be assigned their part in the plan. And for sure, yep, God is the one in control of all of this. So, I need to listen and move in the direction God provides me.

If I am listening to all I have just said, then I can take comfort in knowing that God was preparing me for this time of transition and was preparing others to take over all along. So though my time is over or is in transition, the work will go on, and God will be the one guiding the work. That is so much better than my trying to hold on for one more day, week, month and so on.

## Joshua 14 – beyond retirement

So now the contrast and the challenge. Joshua has been declared old and advanced in years. He has been carrying out the work given to him. One phase is done, and there is more to do. His task now is to divide the land and let others do the rest of the work.

As he starts the process of assigning the land, Caleb appears. He is 85 years old. He is old and advanced in years. He was one of the spies that said we can conquer the land. He has wandered in the wilderness for 40 years and, if my math is correct, he has been fighting alongside Joshua for the past five years in the work of conquering the land.

He is old, he has been faithful. He deserves to rest and enjoy all that has been accomplished. At least that is what one might normally expect of one who is old and has lived a full and arduous life. That is what one might expect.

But that is not the attitude of Caleb. He is not interested in the past. He is not interested in resting. He is not interested in quitting and resting. No. He states that he is as strong and healthy as he was when he went to spy out the land. He is ready for the next challenge. He has fulfilled all that was expected of him. He did his job as a spy. He faithfully followed Moses for 40 years. He has faithfully followed Joshua during the campaign of conquest. Now he wants to take on the next challenge. He wants to be allowed to receive his portion of the land promised to him.

Take note that the portion assigned to him is not going to be easy to claim. It is a hilly country, and it has giants. The very same giants the other 10 spies feared and used before to convince Israel to defy God. This is the assignment he says is his. Retirement. Relaxing. Resting on past accomplishments. None of these are what he desires. He wants, cries for, demands the right to continue serving, to continue working, to do all he can to serve and do the work given to him.

He is quite an example. Transition is not about taking a break. It is not about sitting back and watching others do all the work. Transition is about understanding where I have been and also understanding what is next. It is about an honest appraisal of who I am, what I have done, and what I am still capable of doing. It is about knowing the work that is still mine to do.

Transition allows me to step out of my role of the past and enter into another role that will provide me with meaningful activity and the opportunity to continue to serve.

Wow!

There is no retirement here. There is no resting on the accomplishments of the past. There is no saying I have done my part so let others do the rest of the work. Caleb was able to assess what he had done and make an honest appraisal of what he still could do. In this case, he still had the capacity to fight. He also knew the limits of his capacity. If you read in Judges 1:11-15 you will note that Caleb allows others to be part of the work he had accepted. He did not strive to do everything. He was also open to the suggestions of others about what could be done.

This transition was not about pride. It was not about trying to hang on a little longer. It was not about a desire to continue to be active just to maintain one's name and position. It was about seeing what one could still do and about knowing one's limits and involving others in the work that lay ahead.

So, I am old, but am I decrepit? Am I no longer capable of serving? Am I to be put out to pasture and allowed to waste away? Are my abilities no longer needed? No. But...

I say but, because what comes next is critical. If the goal is to not let go, but to force people to allow one to continue, to serve beyond my capacity to do so and in defiance of the Lord's instruction, then I will become a source of conflict and create problems. However, if the goal is to continue serving but in a healthy way that honestly reflects my abilities -- social, physical, mental,

and spiritual -- then the transition will provide great opportunities to serve and be a great source of encouragement to others.

It does not matter what the transition is. Holding onto the past will not work. What must happen is to have a clear assessment of who I am and what I can do. If I can do that, then there is still work for me to do, and it will have value both for me and for those around me. It will be a source of encouragement and hope to others.

## Joshua 15 – clarity of sight

Here begins three chapters of detailed information about the land being assigned to the different tribes. The information includes a clear definition of the boundaries for each tribe and in some cases a list of the cities within those boundaries.

There is one other interesting item found within the first of these descriptions of the boundaries. It is the mention of something called the stone of Bohan. Such items have two focuses, and each focus represents a different aspect of a successful time of transition. It also means that the one in transition has a clear view of the past and how to look forward into the future.

Let's start with the stone of Bohan. Actually, there is no information about what this stone represents. The most common interpretation is that it represents a remarkable effort on the part of an individual during the campaign of conquest. What that may have been is not given to us. All we know is that for some reason a person named Bohan, of the tribe of Reuben, had a stone erected at a certain place, and that place became an important point of demarcation in defining boundaries for the tribe of Judah and its bordering tribes.

While we don't have much information about what happened, what is significant for me is the fact that this action was commemorated and then further identified as a key reference point in defining a particular boundary.

The point is that, as we transition, do we have a clear knowledge of the activity of those who made it possible for us to arrive at this day in our lives? Are we honest enough to include them in our reports and memories? Are we willing to give credit to those who have been part of the work we have been doing and made it possible for us to have a successful time of transition?

That also means that it is possible for a transition to be a result of failure to carry out our task. A rather sad situation that occurs all too often. If that is the case, then the mention of others may have a negative purpose, that of shifting the blame from myself to others. Then the only reason for mentioning such a place or event would be to some who shift the responsibility of failure to others.

Fortunately, that is not what has happened here. The campaign was a success. That means if I am wise as I deal with the process of transition, I will identify those who have made it possible for this day to arrive. I will give them the credit due to them. Such an action can and will provide the encouragement needed for them to feel capable of taking over the work as I leave and move on to



another place or assignment. It will reveal my level of confidence in those with whom I have worked. The better I am at remembering them and giving them credit, the easier the transition will be.

The second point of significance is the detailed nature of the description of the boundary. Transition is never an easy process. What can facilitate the process is attention to detail. If I am vague in what I share, then others will not be as willing to take over. If I have been disorganized or worse, kept all the details and information to myself, then they will be frustrated over the lack of information available. That would be the lesser issue. The other extreme would be that of outright anger at my unwillingness to trust them and then leave them inadequately prepared for the work for which they will now be responsible.

Joshua does both. He remembers who and what has been accomplished and gives clear guidelines and information for them and the work to be done.

So am I doing this? Is my transition marked by a lack of trust and lack of clarity about what lies ahead? Will those who follow me be aided by how I handle the process of transition, or will I, by my attitude, hamper their ability to continue the work? Do my words remind them of how they have been a critical part of why we are where we are? Do my instructions and comments help them see where things are in this moment and so help them move forward in the work that is to be done?

If not, then I am not doing a very good job of transitioning. In fact, I may be fighting the process. I may be withholding key information and doing so for a number of reasons, most of which come out of a desire to be seen as indispensable.

## Joshua 16 – credit

We all want to be remembered. We all want credit for our service and our faithfulness. Most of all, we want to see it now and hear people tell others about us. This is normal, right?

The question is twofold. Is it appropriate? How should it happen?

This passage focuses on the land to be allocated to the two tribes who descended from Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh. Well, the other half of Manasseh, because part of this tribe received their portion on the other side of the Jordan.

It is an interesting series of events that bring us to this point. Why do I say that? Well, Joseph is not the firstborn, and yet he receives a double portion. Judah was not the firstborn, and he receives a very large single portion. So many details and questions. Like...Why were the first three sons skipped to arrive at Judah's being selected for special recognition? Why were 10 of the tribes skipped and the double portion of the eldest given to Joseph? Also, there were 12 sons, one, a Levite, received no inheritance, but we still talk about the twelve tribes of Israel. His line is not in the list of the 12 tribes. Instead, Joseph's sons take the place of Joseph and Levi in the lists.

What does this have to do with me and the process of transition? Well, it has to do with the fact that God does remember and does reward or recognize what we have done, our faithful service. He also remembers our failure. This reality is reflected in the lives of those we work with.

Let me explain a little.

Reuben, the oldest, is skipped over regarding the honors tied to being the eldest. He will not be the head of his siblings and will not receive the double portion. This is because he committed a serious sin by sleeping with his father's concubine, who was the mother of some of his brothers. So, though he receives an inheritance, it is not what it could have been.

Levi and Simeon kill a city of men in revenge for the rape of their sister. It is done by deception and makes it hard for the family to feel safe in that land. They are not allowed to receive either the place of honor to lead the family nor given the double portion. Simeon receives a small portion, but it is within the territory of Judah and is given because Judah's portion is larger than necessary. Kind of humiliating don't you think?

Levi gets nothing, but because of the faithfulness of Moses and Aaron, they receive a special place among the tribes. They are chosen to care for the tabernacle. Yet, every day is a reminder that they have no land, and no permanent place in the land. They are given cities where they can live and not much more. This means they are dependent on all the rest of the tribes for their livelihood.

Joseph is the firstborn of Rachel, but number 11 over-all. Because of his past faithful service to the family by being the one who makes it possible to survive the famine and have a place to settle and multiply, he is given the double portion of the eldest.

There are three things to be conscious of in all of this. Let me call them three levels of recognition for faithful service. There are also two levels of negative recognition, things I need to avoid.

Let me start with the negative.

1. Overstepping my rights and authority. This is the example of Reuben. He was the eldest, but that did not give him the liberty to use what belonged to his father, as if it were his own. It could be compared to claiming a level of privilege and authority because of who I am as an assistant to a leader. I do things that I am not authorized to do. Such actions lead to being passed over when transitions come. It is as if I want to create my own little kingdom and usurp the power of those over me. This never ends well.
2. Bullying others. This is, in a sense, what Levi and Simeon did. They used the rules to gain control over others. If you do this, it will likely boomerang on you. But that is not what they intended. They wanted revenge and used their beliefs and practices to set up their enemy for destruction. Think about it, who would want a leader who willingly abuses their power to harm others for personal reasons?

Now let's look at the positive.

1. Being faithful and consistent. This is the life of the other eight brothers. They did not abuse their liberty as the children of Jacob. They did not abuse their position to harm or control

others. At the same time, they did not do anything of great remark to advance the family. They do not stand out.

2. Being strong and faithful. This is the tribe of Judah. They are the largest tribe. Judah knew what was right and acted on it. He convinced his brothers not to kill Joseph and was hoping to release him. He takes the lead in convincing his father to let Benjamin go with them to buy more grain in Egypt and is willing to take Benjamin's place in prison. He also confesses the guilt of the brothers in deceiving their father regarding what happened to Joseph. He is clearly seen as the leader.
3. Being humble and able to lead. This is Joseph. Although he starts out as a brat, egotistical, he learns to be humble and becomes a great leader. He saves his family and helps them prosper.

Now as I look at this time of transition, I find it is a time to review my life and ministry based on how it has helped others to grow and develop. The central point is whether I have carried out my work in such a way that will help them avoid the negative. They do not abuse what they have received for personal gain, and they do not rule over others.

Instead, they are able to accomplish the tasks assigned to them. Further, they have learned to be faithful and are capable of leading others. Lastly, they have learned humility and become servants of others.

Now comes the hard part in this. I may not be able to see the final results immediately. This is the next aspect of handling transition correctly. It is not my job to determine who can do what. Truthfully, I may not see what lies within. I may be preferential in my actions and choices. Sometimes it takes time for all that has been learned to come together in a person and allow them to be ready for more.

So, do I trust God to use what he has done in my life to help others learn to be faithful and humble and so able to truly lead others? If I do, then I will be able to make the transition. I will allow God to work and provide the right people to carry on the ministry I have been involved in. This is as it should be because, in all honesty, the work was never mine in the first place. It belongs to God, and so he will care for things in ways that I may not see now or ever. Sometimes the real proof of whether I have served correctly will come later, even possibly after I am dead.

Hopefully, it will not take that long. But if I don't let go and move on to the next thing God has for me, I will never see it happen. What I must do is faithfully carry out my work, faithfully listen to God, and when the time comes make the transition, so God can continue the work in the lives of others according to their skills and abilities.

## Joshua 17 - dealing with complications

One of the hard realities in the process of transition is that there will always be issues to deal with. Two of those issues appear in this passage. The first is unfulfilled promises. The second is complaints about how things are being handled.

The first is actually a good issue. If promises have been made and yet to be fulfilled, then they need to be identified and dealt with. In this case the promise had to do with the daughters of Zelophehad. Normally, inheritance passed through the sons of a person. In this case the inheritance of land was involved, and since the man had only daughters, then the land would be lost to his family. A special ruling was made in reference to this. It was regarding the case of a man having no male descendants, then the land would pass to the daughters.

It is not important to the discussion of transition, the whys and wherefores about how inheritance is handled. What is important is that a promise was made, and the time had come to deal with it. In this case, the promise had been made by Moses long before the people had entered into the land. The daughters of Zelophehad take this moment to remind Joshua of that promise.

Again, the issue is not so much about who or when the promise is made. Sometimes a promise made by one will become the responsibility of the next leader to carry out. Sometimes it will be a promise of the current leader, and it must be dealt with before they leave.

What is critical in each of these is knowing what promises are valid, and when is the appropriate time to fulfill them. Not doing so will plant seeds of discontent which, at some future date, can cause problems and affect the unity and cooperativeness of those we lead or of those who take our place.

Does this relate to all types of transition? Do we need to remember the promises we have made and keep them, no matter what kind of transition we are making? The wise answer is yes. Any promise made and unfulfilled will create issues at some point in the future. It would be wiser not to make a promise than to make one and not keep it.

So here I am. I am in transition. This is the time to review the work I have been doing and any promises or commitments I have made that remain unfulfilled. In a way, my transition will not be fully realized until they are cared for. It is also a time to carefully analyze any requests for continued involvement and whether I can make promises that cannot be fulfilled before, during, or after the transition I am making.

There is one other factor to be considered. Moses made the promise to these women. He also knew that keeping the promise would be the work of others. Or, at least, the end of the process would be the work of others, in this case Joshua and the leaders. In the same way, are the promises I make such that others will be able to carry them out. It could be that I can only start the process that others will need to continue. Am I wise enough to know which is which, as I make the transition and know who will be able to finish what has been started? This means, I know the people around me and know what they can do and must make my promises accordingly.

Promises made and kept can help make the transition process so much smoother.

The other issue has to do with disgruntled people. There are always this kind of people. They are always present. How we handle their complaints will have an impact on the process of transition.

Sometimes the complaints are well-founded and must have an appropriate response. Sometimes they complain just to create problems.

In this case, one group of people think they should have more land, more responsibility. They think they can do more than they really can do. Rather than deny them, Joshua gives them another piece of land. Instead of being grateful, they complain some more. He uses their own arguments against them, which silences any further complaint. That will not always be the case, of course. Some people will complain no matter how we respond.

The issue here is, am I aware of the complaints that may arise as a result of the transition I am making? Also, am I ready to give a wise answer to those complaints?

The reality is that I may not know. People are like that. They wait until an inopportune time to express their dissatisfaction with the decisions being made. They wait until the last minute to express their dissatisfaction with, well with whatever they can find. You didn't do this, you did this and not that, you didn't do enough, you overdid that, and on goes the list of complaints.

In this case, it is about not treating them the way they thought they should be treated. They didn't get what they wanted. They had an overinflated opinion of their relationship and status.

Again, the question is whether every type of transition will experience having people who complain about anything they can find to complain about, as we move on. The answer is yes. There will always be people who find some way to complain about something. The key is being able to know how to respond or not respond to them.

It is a sad reality that no matter how well you have done your job and how well a transition has been planned, there will be those who complain. If I am not prepared for this, then all the good that is happening in the process of transition can be lost and overshadowed by the complaints. In fact, complaints and unfulfilled promises can have about the same effect, a failed transition.

Transition is inevitable. Dissatisfied people are a given. My responsibility is to know what to do in responding to them, so that the transition will go smoothly and positively for all involved, as much as possible.

## Joshua 18 - unfinished business

No matter how hard you plan and organize things, there is always something that is left to do. You may think you have covered everything. You may think you have taken all the variables into account. You may think you are in control of the process, and in a sense you are. Therein lies another issue. The attempt to do everything and care for every little detail before you leave.

To attempt to provide all everyone needs is a pride issue. It communicates to those who will follow you that, in a way, you don't trust them. You don't believe in their ability to deal with what you have left undone. In a way, you are communicating to them that they will fail without your help and guidance. This is not a good way to handle transition.

I am not sure if Joshua was being intentional, but he does a wise thing at this point. He assigns a group of the leaders to deal with the next part of the process of handing over the work to others. At this point, only five of the tribal groups have received their portions. Two of them were easy to deal with, Gad and Reuben. They had received their portions from Moses. Next were the tribes of Manasseh (only half of this tribe had received their land from Moses, leaving the other half until now) and Ephraim, the sons of Joseph. Last was the tribe of Judah, the future royal line.

Now it is time for the other seven tribes to receive their share. Joshua sends out a team of leaders to survey the land and divide into seven portions. What I find interesting is that there are no instructions given as to how much land is to be in each portion. Looking at a map, the portions were clearly different in size and in the nature of the land within them. It appears that this group of leaders had the freedom to make those decisions, how much land and what kind of land.

The point is that if I have done my job correctly as a leader, then I should be able to entrust the work to others and do so even before I leave. If I have done my work correctly, then they should have the tools needed to carry out critical tasks without my input and control at every point in the process.

Truthfully, this process of sharing the work must start before the time of transition. If I am a wise person and leader, I will begin involving people in the work and giving them the authority to do the work as well. Even more important is to let them make the decisions about how the work is to be done. If this is done correctly, then the transition process will go smoothly.

When things go smoothly, there is less stress for the one in transition and those taking over the work. When things go smoothly, there is no gap or down time in the process of transition. There is no loss of momentum or wasted time and energy trying to get things moving again. There is no confusion about who is to do what, and who is in charge. The lines of communication are clearly defined. This allows the new leadership to function correctly from the moment the transition occurs.

It is a great way to analyze how I am doing as a leader, when it is time for transition. The best description of this would be to say, I am no longer needed. That creates a feeling of sadness and loss. That is because we like to feel needed and sometimes struggle with transition over this loss of being needed.

Instead, we should find ourselves rejoicing that those who take over can do so, because we have done the work correctly, been a great leader who serves others and encourages them and have successfully prepared others to do the work and even build on it. This should bring joy and allow great freedom in taking on new challenges and enjoying what has been accomplished.

Does this mean I will no longer be needed? Does it mean I no longer have a place within the group? I don't think so. In this passage after they had done the survey, it is Joshua who carries out the process of casting lots and officially assigning the land. Keep in mind that the Lord was in control of the process not Joshua. He simply carried out the action. Think of it this way, he was given the honor of performing a service. The real work had been done by others.

Also, as we will see later, the people did consult with Joshua. The people did respond to him when he called them together to talk about the future. The people heard his advice and responded. What he did not do was to continue leading them into battle. He did not continue to make critical decisions about how they should proceed with the conquest. Now, each tribe was responsible to act.

One more thing. He did not stop providing a critical resource. He could be called on to evaluate how they were doing and make recommendations. They could call on him if needed. They could choose to accept or reject his recommendations. The key in this is/was his ability to correctly handle this critical part of the transition process, demonstrating confidence in their ability to carry on the work.

That is a key challenge for me. I want to be needed. I want to continue to be part of what is happening. If I handle the transition correctly, there will be a place for me that will satisfy my need and theirs as well. If I handle transition correctly, they will be willing to seek my advice and involvement, if and when it is necessary. If I handle transition correctly, then they, and I, will have greater liberty to serve each other and the work God has called us to do.

## Joshua 19 - Another gift

This chapter is mostly a listing of the land and who is assigned to each of the portions identified by the survey done by the leaders.

What is of interest is in the last few verses. The people decide to give Joshua an inheritance of his own in the land. Even more interesting is that they ask him which town he would like.

I have traveled a lot and been the guest in many countries. It is very typical that they give me a gift as a way of saying thanks for what you have shared with us. It is usually a small item, something that often has the name of the place on it. In all my travels, I have never been asked what I would like as a gift of remembrance.

As a result, I have received many interesting items. Some I have been able to use in my ministry. But most of them are decorations, and of those, some have really had no other purpose. I will not use them, and I will probably not put them on display. What I will remember is not the item but the intent behind the item.

These items have been for specific events and are given as a symbol of their gratitude. More recently I have received items that represent transition. These gifts involve more thought and consideration. They are not souvenir type items. Instead, they are plaques that include a statement about the work done and their evaluation of that work. If I have done well in what I was asked to do, that will be reflected in the material chosen, the comments made, and the manner in which it is presented.

Again, they did not ask me what I wanted. They simply chose what they thought would be appropriate. Now I am not Joshua. I do not live among those I have served. So, offering me a place to live would not be possible. Also, in the cultures and places I have served, I have never heard of the honored person being asked what they would like as a gift for the service given. It is not part of their way of thinking.

So, what do I expect as I transition? What do I think would be a gift that would truly reflect the work that has been done and the relationships that have been built? To be honest, I have no idea what I would ask for. Do I expect or hope for something? Again, to be honest. Yes, I would love to receive a gift of thanks from those I serve and are my friends/coworkers.

And this is where things get so complicated. Expectations in the area of gifts are a fuzzy concept. We have them but often are unsure what would fulfill such expectations. That makes the whole process of recognition and expressing thanks a complicated one. That is because what I expect as a gift of thanks and recognition may not match what they give me. Why?

Actually, why doesn't matter. What matters most is not the gift but another why. The why behind the gift. There are two reasons why such gifts are given. The first is a sense of obligation. The person has carried out this job for x number of years, and so we need to recognize their commitment. So often this takes the form of anniversary gifts. So, at 5, 10, 15 and so on, depending on the pattern of the group, a person will receive at least a document stating they have completed so many years of service. Then at more significant points, like 25 years, there may be a small gift included. A fancier plaque, a monetary gift, or something that expresses gratitude for the years of service more publicly. The final one of these would be at the point of retirement.

The key issue is, do I feel they are obligated to do something? If so, then what are my expectations, and what are theirs? If they don't match, then there will be tension. When obligation is a factor in recognition, it can get messy, especially if I have a preconceived concept of what I deserve, and it doesn't match what I get. Enough said here.

The other issue is because of our friendship. If this is the basis for recognition, then it really doesn't matter what is given and received. What matters is that there is gratitude for the work that has been done and, more importantly, the relationships that have been established. When friendship is the basis, then a gift is not needed. And to be honest, it is at this level that they may ask what you would like as a gift. If that happens, then be sure your request fits their ability to respond and is appropriate to the setting and relationship.

So, how do I want to end my time? Do I expect a gift? Why do I expect a gift? What kind of expectations do they have? Lots of questions here. But one thing is clear, I need to be very careful about this. My attitude needs to be in line with what the Lord wants and not what I want, or I could do a great deal of damage to myself and to others, as I proceed through the time of transition.

Joshua 20 - refuges

This chapter defines where the cities of refuge are and some of the rules related to them. This is a unique concept found only here and relates to providing a place of safety and security for someone



who accidentally causes the death of another person. This is not about premeditated or recklessness that causes death.

Here is how it works. My actions unintentionally cause the death of another person. The problem was that often those who had the right to seek revenge did not pause to consider the why and how. They simply acted on their right to kill the person who was responsible. The cities of refuge were set up, so that a person who accidentally caused the death of another person could flee there and be safe. At least until the events could be reviewed, and it could be determined if, in fact, it was an accident.

This review could result in one of two decisions. If the person were in fact guilty of what we call premeditated murder. What we define as intentionally acting in a way that would cause the death of a person. This person would be handed over to the family of the one who was killed and would be put to death. That was the only option, since there were no prisons.

The other result would find that the death was indeed accidental. Here is where things get interesting. Though declared innocent, the person could not leave the city of refuge until the death of the current high priest. That means they could be, in a sense, imprisoned in the city for anywhere from a few days to a lifetime. That is because it depended on how long they might live and when the current high priest was installed. If they decided that they did not want to wait so long and left the refuge city, they were no longer protected. If found by the family of the murdered person, they could then legally kill them. Crazy, right?

Now what does that have to do with me and the idea of transition? Just to be clear, I have no intent on causing the death of anyone. I am not involved in this type of situation, and, for the most part, people in transition are not fleeing justice or retribution for past actions.

Still, there is a valuable point buried in the information found here. A key one is that we all need places of refuge. Places we can, in a sense, run to or go to when life gets a little overwhelming. And this can happen. Life has changed, normal avenues of counsel and encouragement are no longer accessible. People move on, and we are left behind. There are many reasons why one can feel abandoned and lost, not sure how to deal with what lies ahead.

The city of refuge and its leaders provided more than just security. They also provided a place where my story could be heard, reviewed to see what happened, and provide advice about next steps. Transition can create a sense of loss and disruption of the normal flow of life. We don't know where to turn or who to talk to.

So, if I am wise, I will begin to think about who I can talk to and maybe where I can go, in order to deal with all that is happening. To deal with all the changes that are occurring. To deal with quite possibly any questions, complaints and failures that may be buried in the process of transition. Yes, I did say failure, because we are not perfect. We do fail, and people will identify those failures and quite possibly pursue us for one reason or another.

So it is important to know who I can turn to for help. Who are the people that can be my places of refuge, where I can share honestly what is happening in my life, as I deal with the process of

transition. They can also help me review the past to explore my failures and how to honestly deal with them. They can help me consider the future to help me be clear about what lies ahead.

We all have these people. Some are friends, some are family members, at times they are coworkers, and at times we will seek professionals, depending on the nature of the issue. They are the places of refuge to which we can turn to help sort through all that is happening and be able to choose the correct way to respond to changes that are a part of any transition. They also help us see more clearly the correct path forward, as we decide what is next.

So, while I am not in need of a place of refuge, because of something as serious as causing a person's death, I do sometimes need a place of safety to help me deal with all that is happening in the time of transition. We all need this, and especially when dealing with transition. We need places of refuge.

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## Joshua 21 – Maintaining the vision

This is a complicated chapter. It reaches back to the actions of the leader before Joshua and promises received during the time of the prior leader. Actually, it reaches even farther back to promises given to Abraham, then Isaac, then Jacob. The key difference is that now people have been assigned to carry out the work involved.

The point of what is happening involves a deeper issue that will profoundly affect what happens in the process of transition. The issue is continuity. Is there agreement in the present with the past? Or is there dissonance? What does that really mean?

Continuity is a big concept. When it exists, transition is easier to process the many aspects of transition. When it does not exist, then people will be uncertain about what lies ahead and how to process the changes that come with transition.

Most organizations have what are called mission or vision statements. These are the guides for the work being done. The more clearly they are stated, the easier it is to transition from one leader to another. That does not mean every leader is a clone of the previous. What it means is that there is freedom to lead and adapt as long as the main thing remains the main thing. Everybody is clear about what cannot change and to some extent, a lot in many cases, can adapt to the transition process.

Let me use a somewhat simplified example, like relocating a family. There are some clear goals in mind. Providing the best environment for the family and its health development. So location, job, friendships can all change, and the focus will not be lost. If that focus is lost, then no matter how nice the home, how great the job, and so on, the family will suffer, and the transition will not bring the benefit envisioned.

In any process of transition, this is a key concern: does the transition I am involved in reflect this truth, that there has been continuity in what I did in relation to the mission and vision where I worked. Did I connect what I did with the past, so that it could live in the present and those who follow me could pick up where I left off and carry it into the future.

There are three stages to this. There is always a past, a present, and a future. The past in this context relates to the promises given by God. In the more immediate past we have Moses. He was used to begin the process of their fulfillment, the original leader in this story. During this time Moses teaches the people what he has learned from God. It is not an easy time. They all learn about the blessing of obedience and the consequences of disobedience. Moses is challenged over and over by the people. He sets the process in motion but does not get to see the fulfillment of the promises regarding the new land.

The second stage is the life and work of Joshua. His focus is on doing what is needed for the fulfillment of the promises related to the land to be realized. He continues the process of helping the people to understand the importance of obedience and the dangers of disobedience. He helps the people enter the land and is able to assign the land to the people.

Now we have come to the third stage. It is time for completing another step in the process of taking over the land. The leaders are the ones to continue this process, and their time begins with the comments found in vs 43-45:

1. The Lord gave them all he had sworn to give their ancestors.
2. The Lord gave them rest as promised, not one of their enemies withstood them
3. Not of one of the Lord's promises failed, all were fulfilled.

This may seem strange, since there is still work to be done. Moses didn't bring them to the land, Joshua did not defeat all of the enemies. They have overall control, but there is more to do. And that is a key point of transition. The work is never completely done. It is the key point that must be kept in focus if the process of transition is to be truly successful. It has to do with allowing all to enjoy the benefits that exist in the process. It has to do with the long view of things as opposed to thinking only in terms of my work and my time. You see, every new generation needs to possess the land and make it theirs.

Did you hear what I just said? Every generation, or new group of people responsible for the work, must make the work theirs and open the way for others to become involved.

We have seen in the previous chapters what this meant in relation to settling the land. Now we see it in relation to the Levites and their responsibility to live among the people and carry on the work of Moses and Aaron, who passed the work on to Eleazer. Now it is the next generation that is dealing with a transition.

Why is this so important?

This comes back to the idea of continuity. The ability to build onto what others have done, seeing my place in the greater plan, and creating a foundation (or building on what exists) in a way that others will be able to continue moving forward.

If I have ignored what others have done before me, built my own plan, rejected the promises that were made, then what will happen when I leave? The same thing. Those who come will have no concern for what I did or accomplished. Even worse, they may actually lose sight of, or the knowledge of, the why behind all that is being done. The vision is lost.

This is not good, because when the vision or reason for a group's existence and activity is altered or lost, it is very difficult to recover it. Those who do remember will lose confidence in whoever becomes the leader.

So, am I making sure that the bigger picture remains in focus? Has the work I have done, the leadership I have given, those I have trained, made it possible to keep the past truth and mission in focus? This will provide those who continue to have what they need to successfully lead and involve the next generation. Paul put it this way: find those you can train who have the capacity to train others. Keep in mind the point of that passage, which was to maintain the work and message of the gospel.

So again, have I made this possible, so that God continues to be the center of the work and is honored by those who continue the work?

## Joshua 22 – Adapting for the future

This chapter contains an interesting story about the 2 ½ tribes and how they have fulfilled their commitment to help the others in the conquest of the promised land. They had received their

portion before crossing the Jordan. They have gained a great deal of wealth as a result of their participation in the conquest. As they leave, they are encouraged to share this with those who were left behind and to be sure to continue to obey the commandments of the Lord. This is good stuff.

When the time of transition comes, this is what we want to be able to say to those who follow us. We want to say they have done everything we have asked them to do. We hope we can say they have benefited greatly from all we have done together. We want them to keep in mind what they have learned and not forget the lessons learned. Especially those that relate to serving the Lord. Anyone in transition in ministry wants all of this.

Now comes the interesting part. They cross the Jordan and promptly build an altar. They had not shared this plan with the others as they departed. They did not send any messengers back to explain what they were doing or why. What happens next is a worry to anyone who hands over their work and responsibility to others. They do something that suggests they are not going to follow all they have learned and potentially cause great damage to the future of the group.

They build an altar, and everyone begins to wonder if they have chosen to defy God and establish their own system of worship. This is a dangerous idea. They have paid dearly in the past when such an action is taken. Defiance of God causes suffering and loss for all.

Thankfully, this is not an attempt to establish their own form of worship or to replace God with a god. Instead, it is set up as a reminder of the connection that exists. They don't want to be forgotten or excluded in the future by the other group. It is also to be a reminder to themselves of all they have received, because they are part of the chosen people of God.

Now for the application to transition.

First, is regarding the benefits that have been received. So, what have people gained, because I have been their leader? More important, if there are blessings or resources that exist because of the skills God has given me to lead others, why do they exist? Do they exist to exalt me? Do they exist because I don't want to be forgotten? While these may be the result of my work, if they are at the center, then I have erected a monument to me and not to God. Which means, any real value that may exist in what I have done, created, or accomplished will not help people to follow God, but instead will mislead them and impede their ability to follow God.

In the same way, if they use what I have done, created, or accomplished to elevate me, then we have the same problem. They are not being helped to focus on the true source of all they are enjoying.

If either of these is happening, then it is better that it all be destroyed, forgotten, and discredited. That may seem harsh. A lot of time, energy, and resources may have been invested in them. But if they lead people away from honoring God to honoring man, or some other object, then this is what should, even must, happen.

So here I am. If I have served correctly and carried out the work correctly, then there will be resources available for the next leader and group. It may be a building, programs, written materials, organizational structures, and many other resources that will bless and help them.

My task then is to make sure there is no confusion about why they were created. No confusion about the true source of everything, which is God. He is the one who provides the skills and resources needed. No confusion about the right way to use them in order to bless others.

Does that mean the one who produces the resources should be forgotten or not honored? No. What it means is that it must be done in a way that allows all to see the One who is the source of all we have received and be able to use it properly. In a way that does not become a monument to a person or group, but a guide that opens the way for others to continue the work and point others to God.

Transition handled correctly will open the way for this to occur.

## Joshua 23 – Staying Relevant

This is the meeting before the meeting. You know, where the leaders get a heads-up related to what lies ahead. I have been in this kind of meeting. It is amazing how many things happen in the “meeting before the meeting.” The meeting sometimes referred to as the one “behind closed doors.”

Many years have passed, and Joshua still commands a great deal of power over the people and their leaders. He calls them, and they all come. Then he calls the leaders aside, and they come. This is quite incredible. He, by his own admission, is old and advanced in years. He is, according to his words, nearing the end of his life.

This is important. This is a challenge. Joshua’s comments are reminders of all that has happened. They are reminders of what is expected of them. They are reminders of the blessings of obedience and the consequences of disobedience. The central one being replacing God with something other than God.

What is even more significant, is the fact that they come. Joshua is still an important part of their world. He is still respected by the old people, the current leaders, the judges and the officials. Many of them would not be his contemporaries but a younger generation. I say this, because Joshua is in fact very old. Many of his contemporaries are dead or have been replaced by a younger generation. Some of them are there, the elders, but there are new faces in the places of leadership.

This is significant. Yes, I already said that, but we need to hear it again. Joshua has been able to remain relevant and aware of what is happening around him. More than that, his life remains connected to them and has not become isolated.

Why do I say that? Think about how we treat the elderly, in general. You, when they say “I remember when.” Or, when they talk about what they did in the past that made what we have possible. You know how much we enjoy hearing these reminders. Why? Not because they are not true. They are. It is because of the way they are told by those who are older. They are trying to regain something of the past and want to be respected for what they have done, not about who they are now and how they are contributing in the present.

We cringe when they do this, not because it is good to be reminded, but because they are repeatedly doing this until we can no longer listen and begin to avoid spending time with them. They have very little interest in what is happening now nor any desire to grow and become part of the present. That is too much work.

So, we relegate them to special days of honor. We say thank you but do our best to avoid letting them speak too much. We don't want to hear how things used to be or why we should be thankful for their sacrifices and service for us. So, we have Father's Day, Mother's Day, Veteran's Day, and so on.

Keep in mind that I am reflecting on this in a general way. It is not true of everyone. Some old people do remain relevant. They do remain active in the present. They seek to understand what is happening and know what to say and, more importantly, when to say it.

This is what is happening with Joshua. He is still respected. They are still willing to hear what he has to say. He has not overstepped his position and rights, as the former leader. He has not battered them over and over with the same old message. And, as we will see in the next chapter, he has remained current with what is happening in the world around him. They know he is an active part of the world and has a right to speak to them. This is powerful evidence that the transition has gone well, and he still has a place in their world.

It makes me wonder what it will be like for me in 10 or 15 years? When I am much older. Will I learn the lessons hidden here? Will I maintain contact with my friends, my coworkers, the leaders, and others? Will I pay attention to how things are proceeding and be able to correctly interpret what I see and hear?

Will I still have the respect of those I have worked with? More important, will that respect extend to those who follow them as well? If these happen, then they are clear evidence that I handled the transition well and have maintained good relations with those who have followed me. It also means that I have not overstepped my rights and whatever privileges were mine. It means that I have shown respect to them. It also means they have received encouragement from me. Not because they tried to copy me and do it my way. Encouragement, because they are obeying God and are maintaining their focus on him.

As I transition, I need to keep this in mind. I need to let go and yet remain relevant. I need to continue to learn, so that when I am asked for advice or evaluation, what I say is relevant to what is happening. I need to ....

The list can continue. That is because each person and group is different. The expectations and opportunities will differ. If identified and treated correctly, then years later there will be freedom to share what has happened, how things look and what will be needed as they move forward.

I need to be sure my transition allows me to remain connected, so they will be open to hearing what I have learned that will be beneficial and pertinent to who they are and what is happening.



