

Gospel Doctrine Lesson 18 : "Be Strong and of a Good Courage"

(Joshua 1–6; Joshua 23–24)

1. The Lord calls Joshua.

Joseph Smith: "Happiness is the object and design of our existence; and will be the end thereof, if we pursue the path that leads to it; and this path is virtue, uprightness, faithfulness, holiness, and keeping all the commandments of God. **But we cannot keep all the commandments without first knowing them.**" (TPJS, p255)

Howard W. Hunter: "Joshua is remembered as the one who, on the death of Moses, took command and completed the task of giving leadership to the tribes of Israel. **Perhaps to comfort Joshua**, who now had the responsibility for the children of Israel, who didn't yet have a homeland, and perhaps to comfort that large body of people who had just lost their leader of more than forty years, **the Lord spoke to Joshua and said:**

"**As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee**" (Josh. 1:5).

"Joshua would need **courage** for what he had to do. **He would need the Lord's help at every step.** Here is a commitment of the Lord to provide that help. With faith in the Lord, Joshua could now go forward, **knowing that the Lord would direct him in the way he should go.** Joshua knew that **his obedience would bring success, and although he did not know exactly how he would succeed, he now had confidence in the result**" ("Commitment to God," *Ensign*, Nov. 1982, 57).

2. Israelites cross the Jordan River on dry ground; by their faith, Jericho is destroyed.

Joshua 4:5-7: And Joshua said unto them . . . take ye up every man of you a stone upon his shoulder, according unto the number of the tribes of the children of Israel: That this may be a sign among you, *that* when your children ask *their fathers* in time to come, saying, **What mean ye by these stones?** Then ye shall answer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord; when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off: and **these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever.**

Howard W. Hunter: "Fathers have been leaving memorials for their children, and children have been raising them to their fathers, since time began. . . . Down through history we have been commanded to construct memorials, or hold Passover feasts, or convene general conferences to preserve the power of our united faith and **to remember the commandments of God in achieving our eternal, unchanging goals**" (*That We Might Have Joy* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1994], 48).

James E. Talmage: "May we not believe that **when Israel encompassed Jericho**, the captain of the Lord's host and **his heavenly trains were there**, and that before their super-mortal agency, **sustained by the faith and obedience of the human army, the walls were leveled?**"

"With **full confidence** in the instructions and promises of God, **Joshua and his intrepid followers laid [spiritual] siege to Jericho**; and the walls of that city of sin fell before the faith of the besiegers without the use of battering rams or other engines of war" (*Articles of Faith*, 222-223 and 93-94).

The Apostle Paul explains Jericho all in one simple sentence: "**By faith the walls of Jericho fell down**" (Heb. 11:30).

**WE CREATE MEMORIALS, LIKE GATHERING STONES, TO REMIND US OF THE GREAT THINGS
THE LORD HAS DONE FOR US IN OUR LIVES.**

STONE #1--Be strong and courageous.

Joshua 1:9: Have not I commanded thee? **Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid**, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God *is* with thee whithersoever thou goest.

STONE #2--God will qualify you:

What promise did the Lord make to Joshua?

Joshua 3:7 And the LORD said unto Joshua, **This day will I begin to magnify thee** in the sight of all Israel, that they may know that, as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee.

STONE #3--Walk to the edge of the light:

Elder Boyd K. Packer: "Shortly after I was called as a General Authority, I went to Elder Harold B. Lee for counsel. He listened very carefully to my problem and suggested that I see President David O. McKay. President McKay counseled me as to the direction I should go. I **was very willing to be obedient but saw no way possible for me to do as he counseled me to do** "I returned to Elder Lee and told him that I saw no way to move in the direction I was counseled to go. **He said, 'The trouble with you is you want to see the end from the beginning.'** I replied that I would like to see at least a step or two ahead. Then came the lesson of a lifetime: **'You must learn to walk to the edge of the light, and then a few steps into the darkness; then the light will appear and show the way before you'** " ("The Edge of the Light," *BYU Today*, Mar. 1991, 22–23).

Neal A. Maxwell: "We all have a need to understand that **we must walk to the edge of the light**, obediently going as far as the Lord has told us to **go before expecting him to help us with the next step**. Why not, in this connection, link the better known and far more dramatic crossing of the Red Sea with the episode involving Joshua and the children of Israel when the time came for them to cross the flood-swollen Jordan River. Notice that in the latter episode **the Lord required them to get the soles of their feet wet first** before he stopped up the swollen Jordan so dramatically" ("Teaching Opportunities from the Old Testament," *Ensign*, Apr. 1981, 60).

STONE #4– Blessings come as needed

Joshua 5:12 -- And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.

Bruce R. McConkie: "He rained manna from heaven upon all Israel, **six days each week for forty years**, lest they perish for want of bread, but the manna ceased on the morrow after they ate of the parched corn of Canaan. Then they were required to supply their own food (Ex. 16:3–4, 35).

"During forty years in the wilderness, **the clothes worn by all Israel waxed not old and their shoes wore not out**, but when they entered their promised land, then the Lord required them to provide their own wearing apparel (Deut. 29:5)" ("Stand Independent above All Other Creatures," *Ensign*, May 1979, 93).

Gerald Quinn told the following story:

I was raised in San Bernardino . . . during the depression. I was taught a marvelous lesson in faith when I was about nine years old. We were living in what could best be described as a converted chicken coop. We owned a piece of ground that bordered a very busy highway. On one occasion our father called us together and said, "I have been impressed that we should spend a day fasting and praying to see if the Lord can't direct us in a path that will help us have enough money to build a home."

His father had a job and all that job paid during the depression was enough for food and clothing for the family and that was all. At the end of this day of fasting, Bro. Quinn approached his children again. Remember Gerald Quinn at this point was about nine. And he said, "I have been impressed that if we will go out in front of our house on this busy street, that we'll be able to find enough change dropped from passing motorists to feed our family." And he said, "then I can take the money I get at work, buy the materials for the house and we can build the house ourselves." Sister Quinn was very supportive and she said, "if that's what you think is right, we'll do it."

Gerald and his young sister were assigned the task of going out and searching the highway. The next morning they went out and spent about 45 minutes walking up and down this highway about 600 yards on either side of the house. They came back with \$.75 that they had found. Those of you that remember the depression, \$.75 was a lot of money. It bought food for the day. The next day they went out and did the same thing and brought back about \$1.23. This was in nickels, dimes and pennies. Brothers and sisters, this went on for four years. Every day they would come back with anywhere from \$.25 to \$1.50 in change.

Bro. Quinn did exactly what he committed to the Lord he would do; took his money from work, bought the materials and they built a home. It was not a palatial place, but it was home. Bro. Quinn said, "I'll never forget the day we finished the home. We had a ceremonial burning of the chicken coop out back. Mom fixed a really neat meal and we all had just kind of a special day.

He said, "the next day, because it had become our habit, my sister and I went out to the street to collect our "daily manna". We spent an hour and didn't find one penny. We came back to the house frantic, approached our mother and said, "Mother, there is no money out there today."

Mom sat them down and taught them a powerful lesson and said, "You didn't expect there to be any money today, did you?" And Jerry, not really understanding this whole process, said, "well, it's been there for four years, why not today?" And then his gracious mother said, "Because we don't need it anymore. And there won't be any money anymore. The Lord provided that while we were building our home. Our home is completed. There won't be any money anymore."

Jerry Quinn had to prove that. For the next three weeks he went out every day and never found another dime. [From an audio recording by Hyrum M. Smith, "A Testimony of the Principles of Faith"]

STONE #5-- I will fight your battles:

D&C 105:14: I do not require at their hands to fight the battles of Zion; for, as I said in a former commandment, even so will I fulfill--I will fight your battles.

STONE #6—Nothing is too hard for the Lord

There is a miracle recorded in Joshua 10 that in scope and implication eclipses nearly every other miracle in the scriptures.

Joshua 10:12-14: "Then spake Joshua to the LORD in the day when the LORD delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and He said in the sight of Israel, **Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed**, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies . . . So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day. And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the LORD hearkened unto the voice of a man: **for the LORD fought for Israel.**"

The messenger of Isaac's birth said, when Sarah laughed, "**Is anything too hard for the Lord?**" (Gen. 18:13, JST). To Mary, Gabriel said, "**For with God nothing shall be impossible**" (Luke 1:27). **We need to have greater faith in this reality.**

STONE #6 – Characteristics of a faithful servant: When enough of the conquest of the Promised Land was completed, Joshua sent the tribes to their inheritances. But first he praised them for their faithfulness. Note the things he said they had done and should do:

- (Josh 22:2) "Ye have kept **all** that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, and have **obeyed my voice in all that I commanded you**"
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| (22:3) "Ye have not left your brethren these many days unto this day" | (22:5) " walk in all his ways " |
| (22:3) "Ye have kept the charge of the commandment of the LORD your God." | (22:5) " keep his commandments " |
| (22:5) "But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law " | (22:5) " cleave unto him " |
| (22:5) " love the LORD your God " | (22:5) " serve him " |

STONE #7--Remember: As Joshua dismisses Israel from the battlefields, **he also charges them to remember how the Lord has blessed them:**

- (24:3) Remember **what I did for Abraham**
- (24:5) Remember that I **sent you Moses and Aaron**
- (24:5) Remember that I **freed you from Egypt**
- (24:7) Remember that I **saved you and destroyed your enemies in the Red Sea**
- (24:8) I gave you **victory over the Amorites**
- (24:11) Remember **how you crossed Jordan**
- (24:11) Remember **how I delivered the people of this land to your hand**
- (24:12) I sent the **hornet before you (nature fought for you)**
- (24:13) I gave you a **land and cities and crops** for which you did not have to labor

Poor memories are a major problem in the standard works, where the word Remember appears 467 times! One of the blessings of a journal is that it helps us and our children to remember what the Lord has done for us.

STONE #8 Choose you this day: Joshua invited Israel to "**Incline [their] heart unto the Lord God of Israel**" (Joshua 24:23). It was time to make a choice.

Howard W. Hunter: "Here was a great statement of full commitment of a man to God; of a prophet to the desires of the Lord; and of Joshua the man to his God, who had many times previously blessed his obedience. He was telling the Israelites that regardless of how they decided, he would do what he knew was right. **He was saying that his decision to serve the Lord was independent of whatever they decided; that their actions would not affect his; that his commitment to do the Lord's will would not be altered by anything they or anyone else would do.** Joshua was firmly in control of his actions and had his eyes fixed on the commandments of the Lord. **He was committed to obedience.**

"Surely the Lord loves, more than anything else, an unwavering determination to obey his counsel. **Surely the experiences of the great prophets of the Old Testament have been recorded to help us understand the importance of choosing the path of strict obedience**" (*That We Might Have Joy* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1994], 155-156).

Josh. 24:14-16 Now therefore **fear the LORD**, and **serve him in sincerity and in truth**: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, **choose you this day whom ye will serve**; whether the gods which your fathers served that [were] on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: **but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD**. And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods.

THE CLEAREST WAY TO LEAVE "STONES" THAT SHOW WHAT THE LORD HAS DONE FOR US IS TO LEAVE A HISTORY OF WHAT GOD HAS DONE FOR US THAT OUR CHILDREN CAN REVIEW AND CHERISH.

President Spencer W. Kimball: Those who keep a book of remembrance are more likely to keep the Lord in remembrance in their daily lives. **Journals are a way of counting our blessings and of leaving an inventory of these blessings for our posterity** (*The Teachings of Spencer W. Kimball*, ed. Edward L. Kimball [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1982, p. 349).

President Spencer W. Kimball: "We hope you will begin as of this date. If you have not already commenced this important duty in your lives, get a good notebook, a good book that will last through time and into eternity for the angels to look upon. **Begin today and write in it your goings and your comings, your deeper thoughts, your achievements, and your failures, your associations and your triumphs, your impressions and your testimonies.** We hope you will do this, our brothers and sisters, for this is what the Lord has commanded, and those who keep a personal journal are more likely to keep the Lord in remembrance in their daily lives" ("President Kimball Speaks Out on Personal Journals," *Ensign*, Dec. 1980, 61).

Your journal should contain stories of the times you moved forward in faith, waiting for the waters to part before you.

3. Joshua and his people covenant to serve the Lord.

Elder Marvin J. Ashton: "Joshua reminds us of the importance of making decisions promptly: 'Choose you this day whom ye will serve; ... but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord' (Joshua 24:15). **Not tomorrow, not when we get ready, not when it is convenient—but 'this day,'** straightway, choose whom you will serve. He who invites us to follow will always be out in front of us with His Spirit and influence setting the pace. He has charted and marked the course, opened the gates, and shown the way. He has invited us to come unto Him, and the best time to enjoy His companionship is straightway. We can best get on the course and stay on the course by doing as Jesus did—**make a total commitment to do the will of His Father**" (Conference Report, Apr. 1983, 41).

President Thomas S. Monson: "A moral coward is one who is afraid to do what he thinks is right because others will disapprove or laugh. Remember that all men have their fears, **BUT those who face up to their fears with dignity have courage as well.**" (*Ensign*, May 2004, 55-56.)

President Ezra Taft Benson: "Now during this critical period, and it is a critical period that we are passing through, I hope that we will keep ever burning in our hearts the spirit of this great work which we represent. If we do so, we'll have no anxiety; we'll have no fear; we'll not worry about the future **because the Lord has given us the assurance that if we live righteously, if we keep his commandments, if we humble ourselves before him, all will be well.** I turn to two passages of scripture today which I'd like to read:

"... **Be strong and of good courage; be not afraid**, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest' (Joshua 1:9).

"This was the Lord's admonition to his son, Joshua, encouraging him to trust in God. Joshua answered that admonition in counsel to his people these words:

"... choose you this day whom ye will serve; ... but as for me and my house, **we will serve the Lord**' (Ibid., 24:15).

"Embodied in these two passages of scripture are the two principal essentials for security and peace: first, trust in God; and second, a determination to keep the commandments, to serve the Lord, to do that which is right. **Latter-day Saints who live according to these two admonitions - trust in God and keep the commandments - have nothing to fear**" (Conference Report, Oct 1950, 145-46).