

A Leader In Every Man!

Leadership (Joshua 1:1-18)

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Dennis Prager, a nationally syndicated conservative radio talk show host, columnist, and author wrote an article which appeared on Townhall.com on September 3, 2014 entitled, "Is America Still Making Men?" He writes:

Every society has to answer a few basic questions in order to succeed and even in order to survive. One of them is, "How do we make good men?"

The reason for the importance of this question is simple: Males untutored about how to control their natures will likely do much harm. Conversely, males who are taught how to control themselves and to channel their drives in positive directions make the world a much better place. The good man is a glory of civilization; the bad man ruins it.

Throughout American history, American society asked, "How do we make men?" It was understood that "man" meant a good man. Anyone who thought about the subject knew that boys who are not transformed into men, remain boys. And when too many boys do not grow up into men, women suffer and society suffers.

What is a man, as opposed to a boy? The traditional understanding was that a man is he who takes responsibility for others, for his family, his community and his country, and of course, for himself. A man stood for ideals and values higher than himself. He conducted himself with dignity. And he was strong.

For much of American history, making boys into men was understood to be of supreme importance, and society was usually successful. When I was a boy in the 1950's, without anyone expressly defining it, I knew what a man was supposed to be. And I knew that society, not to mention my parents, expected me to be one. It went without explicitly saying that I would have to make a living, support myself as soon as possible, and support a family thereafter.

When I acted immaturely, I was told to be or act like a man. I wonder, how many boys are told to be a man today, and if they were would they have a

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clue as to what that meant? It would appear that for millions of American boys, this has not been the reality for decades. Many families, and society as a whole, seem to have forgotten that boys need to be made into men.

God put the word to you men when He called you into His church: "Men wanted; preferred alive, not dead!" Which are you? I know that I have been harping on the men this past year, and that is because I see a trend in the nation, the world, and even in the church. Men are remaining as boys for far too long and this does influence the church. I am not thinking of anybody in particular, I just feel that it is a very important subject that men become good leaders.

If for any reason a man feels that he is a boy at heart and that he does not measure up as a man, he can rest assured that in his role as leader he does possess the innate qualities to lead. Whether he likes it or not, every man must be a leader. He may not be a leader in business, government, or even a local organization, but if he is married he will be the leader of a family. The importance of this position in the home cannot be overstated in the least.

The home is the most basic unit in a stable society and how it functions to meet human needs directly affects all other institutions to which we belong. The man's conduct as "head of the family" will, for better or for worse, affect all of society, even the whole world.

This essential organization, the family, needs good leadership and a man who has all of the qualifications necessary to function successfully in guiding the family safely and securely.

Now, how do we make good men? And how, then, do we become good leaders? Let us take a look at Joshua as leader of Israel. He is the example of a real man and one of the most effective leaders in the Bible. Joshua was 85 years old when he took command of Israel. By this time he was thoroughly trained for the job. He had proved, for forty years, that he would faithfully lead the people in the way of God.

Joshua provided dignified and unselfish statesmanship. Once the division of the land was completed, he carried through the setting up of the Tabernacle; the appointing of the cities of refuge; the arrangement of the Levitical order, and service with the same precision and thoroughness that characterized his other work as Israel's faithful leader after Moses.

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The book of Joshua covers about twenty-five years in one of the most important periods of Israel's history, their conquest and final settlement of the land which God had promised to Abraham and his descendants many centuries earlier.

It is not hard to understand how Joshua came to the position of the leadership of Israel. On the command of Joshua, the priests, who bore the Ark of the Covenant, walked out into the Jordan. Just as the waters of the Red Sea parted forty years before, the waters of the Jordan parted so Israel could cross into the Promised Land.

God performed through Joshua a similar miracle as through Moses. By this, the people could confidently know God had selected Joshua to lead them. However God did not just pick him out of the blue. He trained him for forty years. Joshua was preeminent as a military leader; he knew how to plan campaigns, discipline his forces, use spies, but above all, pray to and trust in God.

Many a general has closely studied Joshua's conquest of Canaan and followed his strategy. He never stooped to pilfering and plundering. Joshua was first of all a good soldier of the Lord and he obeyed the Commander of the Lord's army. Joshua assumed the command and he was visited by the Eternal, who encouraged and assured him with the words: "Be strong and of good courage" and, "the Lord your God is with you wherever you go," as it is stated in Joshua 1.

Joshua 1:1-9 After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, it came to pass that the Lord spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying: "Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them—the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you, as I said to Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon as far as the great river, the River Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and to the Great Sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your territory. No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded

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you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.”

Later, in chapter 5, all the male Israelites were circumcised and this had not been done in the forty years of wandering. Israel kept the Passover on the 14th of Nisan. The next day, the manna that had fed the Israelites for forty years stopped, and they could begin living off the produce of the land. Let us read chapter 5 here. Then the Commander of the Lord’s army spoke to Joshua, saying:

Joshua 5:13-15 And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, “Are You for us or for our adversaries?” So He said, “No, but as Commander of the army of the Lord I have now come.” And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped, and said to Him, “What does my Lord say to His servant?” Then the Commander of the Lord’s army said to Joshua, “Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand is holy.” And Joshua did so.

So we know that this commander of the Lord’s army is Jesus Christ because Joshua worshipped Him, which would not have been allowed had He been a mere angel.

Joshua had a great respect and reverence for the God of Israel and his reaction was typical of human beings who come close in proximity to the glory of God. You remember how Isaiah reacted when he saw a glimpse of the glory of God: “Woe is me, for I am undone!” He just felt like his body was coming apart because he felt so filthy being a sinner before God.

As Joshua faced the tremendous task of conquering Canaan, he needed a fresh word of encouragement and God provided him with that because of the great responsibility that he was given. In a sense this responsibility that Joshua was given was no less than every man in God’s church has. Not only to his family, and to the church itself, but also to the preparation for the coming Kingdom of God.

From personal observation Joshua knew that the Canaanites and others were vigorous people who lived in strongly fortified cities. Frequent battles kept their warriors in trim fighting condition, and for the most part the land was mountainous, a fact that would make war maneuvers very difficult.

But when God gives a command He often accompanies it with a promise. He assured Joshua a lifetime of continuous victory over his enemies, based on His unfailing presence and help. God never walks out on His promises. What God literally told him was, "I will not drop or abandon you."

Flowing from this strong affirmation that God would never let Joshua down was God's threefold call to courage. First, Joshua was commanded to be strong and courageous because of God's promise of the land.

Strength and fortitude would be required for the strenuous military campaign just ahead, but Joshua was to keep uppermost in his mind the fact that he would succeed in causing Israel to inherit the land because it had been promised to their forefathers, that is to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the entire nation, the seed of Abraham, as an eternal possession.

Joshua was to lead the children of Israel into possession of this Promised Land. That was a strategic role he was to play at this crucial time in his nation's history.

While in any given generation the fulfillment of this great and significant promise depends on Israel's obedience to God, there can be no question that the Bible affirms Israel's right to the land. By divine contract the title is hers even though she will not possess it totally and enjoy it fully until she is right with God, which will not come until the Millennium.

The second call to courage addressed to Joshua was that he was, again, commanded to be strong and very courageous, being careful to obey all the law of Moses. This commandment is based on God's power through His Word. This is a stronger exhortation, indicating that greater strength of character would be required to obey God's Word faithfully and fully than to win military battles. The emphasis in these verses is clearly on a written body of truth. Joshua 1:7-8 are a clear reference to an authoritative book of the law.

Joshua 1:7-8 Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.

Now to enjoy prosperity and be successful in the conquest of Canaan Joshua was to do three things with regard to the Scriptures: 1) The law was not to depart from his mouth; he was to talk about it. 2) He was to meditate on it day and night and to think about it. 3) He was to do everything written in it; to obey its commands fully and to act by it.

These three things are also things that as leaders in the church today, leaders in our families, men in general but also women as well, because women will also be leaders in the Kingdom of God, should take to heart.

Joshua's life demonstrates, in a practical way, that he lived according to the teachings of the law of God through Moses, the only portion of the Word of God at that time in the written form. This alone explains the victories he achieved in battle and the success that marked his entire career.

Because he did these things he was successful as a leader and we can apply the same principles today in any leadership position.

In one of his farewell addresses to the nation, just before he died, he urged the people to live in submission to the Scriptures.

Joshua 23:6-8 Therefore be very courageous to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, lest you turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left, and lest you go among these nations, these who remain among you. You shall not make mention of the name of their gods, nor cause anyone to swear by them; you shall not serve them nor bow down to them, but you shall hold fast to the Lord your God, as you have done to this day.

Tragically, they heeded this charge for only a short time. In succeeding generations the people of Israel refused to be guided by God's authoritative revelation, and they all did what they themselves chose to do. Rejecting an objective standard of righteousness, they chose a subjective one characterized by moral and spiritual relativism. This in turn plunged the nation into centuries of religious apostasy and moral anarchy. Very similar to where our nation is today, making the same mistakes and ignoring these leadership principals.

The third call to courage addressed to Joshua was based on the promise of God's presence. This did not minimize the task Joshua faced. He would encounter giants and

fortified cities, but God's presence would make all the difference.

Joshua probably had times when he felt weak, inadequate, and even frightened. Perhaps he considered resigning before the conquest even began, but God knew all about his feelings of personal weakness and fear and told Joshua three times, "Be strong and courageous." He would not have repeated it over and over to him if he did not have a weakness in this area, if he did not need to be reminded for the rest of his life.

God also urged him not to be afraid or discouraged. These charges with their accompanying assurances—God's promise; God's power; and God's presence—were sufficient to last a lifetime. We in God's church today should be encouraged by the same three assurances. He has promised all three of these things to us today in our spiritual warfare.

Christian men, especially, must take note of these God-given assurances. In this present society and its decades-long quest to socially re-engineer the role of men in leadership have made men weak. Men today have been so grossly intimidated by homosexuals and feminists that most men today cover under the cover of political correctness when it comes to standing up for what is right and moral.

Christian men must come out of the mindset of the world and be spiritually strong and courageous, unlike "man-boys," the men who immaturely remain boys.

Joshua was a strong and courageous leader of ancient Israel obviously, but initially he struggled, as all men do, to overcome his fear of responsibility in leadership.

Joshua 1:9-11 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go. Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, "Pass through the camp and command the people, saying, 'Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you will cross over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess.'"

I do not know how many people that he was commanding at that time, but it was very likely in the millions, so he would have already had to establish an authority with the people and with what God had done in the miracles showing the Joshua was their leader.

The first chapter of Joshua contains two main parts. One section tells of the call and commissioning of Joshua and the other section tells how Joshua assumed command of the nation and began to give instructions for entering the Promised Land.

Joshua's assumption of command followed his commissioning. He was not presumptuous and did not market himself for the job, rather he let God establish him in that. The remarkable thing is that Joshua seems to have been afraid of this responsibility. It seems this way because the most repeated words in the chapter are those commanding him not to be afraid.

God tells Joshua to be strong and courageous three times, in verses 6, 7, and 9, then adds at the end of verse 9, "Do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." In verse 18, the people tell Joshua the same thing.

Joshua 1:18 Whoever rebels against your command and does not heed your words, in all that you command him, shall be put to death. Only be strong and of good courage."

In spite of what must have been a very acute sense of inadequacy, Joshua did definitely take charge. From the very first, he showed that he was the Lord's man for this time period.

Now where did Joshua get this courage? How did he become a great leader? The answers to those questions are important as we look for Christian leaders today.

God provides Joshua, and all men, four ingredients necessary for good leadership. The first, is that of a faithful past. We do not often think of that, of what a man ought to have been throughout his life to be a great leader.

This nation blind to this. God has blinded them in addition to them blinding themselves, and that is why we have the leaders we have today. Every president that we have had over the decades have had a corrupt past. Good leadership does not happen overnight, there is a time of preparation. Joshua prepared for forty years. The greater the responsibility, the greater the training.

Joshua is the chief character of the book that bears his name, but his story does not begin in Joshua. It actually begins in Exodus and continues in the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy. In fact, Joshua appears twenty-seven times in these narratives, each time painting a picture of exemplary faithfulness.

The first appearance of Joshua in the Bible is in Exodus 17:8-16, which tells of the very first battle the tribes of Israel had after they had been led out of Egypt by Moses and crossed the desert to Rephidim.

The battle was against the Amalekites, a semi-Semitic tribe that occupied the wide desert region between the southern borders of Palestine and Mount Sinai. Moses gave Joshua command of the Israelite troops in this battle. This means that from the very first, Joshua was the leading soldier of Israel under the overall command of Moses. But the significant part of the story is the description of how the battle was actually won and the fact that this was to be recorded in the book of the law for Joshua's later remembrance and benefit.

We are told that while Joshua was leading the armies of the Lord against the Amalekites, Moses went up on a hill overlooking the battlefield and raised his hands as a sign of God's blessing. And as long as his hands were up, the Israelites were winning. But when he grew tired and lowered his hands, the Amalekites would begin to defeat Israel.

This became clear to Aaron and Hur, who were with Moses, so they had Moses sit on a large rock while they stood on either side of him and supported his arms. They did this until sunset, by which time the armies of the Amalekites were overcome.

No doubt this was intended as a lesson for Joshua and that he learned it permanently and well. God could have given them the victory without Moses' raised arms, as He did on numerous other occasions, but in this, the first battle of Israel, Moses' raised arms were undoubtedly God's way of showing that the battle is not to the swift and the mighty, but rather that it is the Lord's. It is God who gives victory!

Joshua learned, and the story was recorded explicitly for his later benefit in this area, that although he would always have to do his best to be an outstanding general, he would succeed at that calling only to the extent that the Lord blessed him and that he would have to seek that blessing.

Exodus 17:13-15 So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. Then the Lord said to Moses, "Write this for a memorial in the book and recount it in the hearing of Joshua, that I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." And Moses built an altar and called its name, The-Lord-Is-My-Banner.

So that was done way back in the beginning of their wandering in preparation for Joshua to be the leader of Israel. God plans ahead, just as He has in each and every one of our lives. He has been working with and training all of us, both men and women, for a long time now.

The second time we see Joshua is at Mount Sinai, to which Moses was called by God to receive the law. When Moses went up the mountain, Joshua went with him, stopping partway. He stayed at his post on the mountain during the entire forty days that Moses was meeting with God.

This is recorded from Exodus 24, where he is first mentioned in this incident, all the way to Exodus 32, when Moses came back down the mountain, joined Joshua, and moved to repress the rebellion that had erupted in the camp.

This must have been an extraordinarily formative period in Joshua's life. Verse 13, which mentions Joshua specifically, is preceded by verses telling how Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel, including Joshua, went up into the mountain and saw the God of Israel.

Exodus 24:10-13 and they saw the God of Israel. And there was under His feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and it was like the very heavens in its clarity. But on the nobles of the children of Israel He did not lay His hand. So they saw God, and they ate and drank. Then the Lord said to Moses, "Come up to Me on the mountain and be there; and I will give you tablets of stone, and the law and commandments which I have written, that you may teach them." So Moses arose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up to the mountain of God.

Now if this experience was anything like Isaiah's experience of seeing the Lord high and lifted up, which he describes in the sixth chapter of his prophecy, then Joshua and the others must have been shaken by this inescapable revelation of God's holiness.

This would have increased Joshua's horror at the rampant sin later discovered in the camp when the Israelites indulged in their orgy around the Golden Calf. Joshua would have learned that flagrant sin; deliberate sin; willful sin is the worst kind of an abomination that cannot be tolerated among those who profess to be God's people.

The third and most revealing of these many references to Joshua in Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy is the story of the sending of the twelve spies into the Promised Land

in Numbers 13-14.

As far as the land itself was concerned, the reports of the twelve spies agreed, it was a land flowing with milk and honey, a good land. They even brought back a huge cluster of grapes, pomegranates, and figs as proof of the land's fertility. But this is where the similarity ended. Ten of the twelve tribes added their negative comments.

Numbers 13:16 These are the names of the men whom Moses sent to spy out the land. And Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun, Joshua. [and Joshua means God is salvation]

Numbers 13:28-33 [the ten are speaking here] Nevertheless the people who dwell in the land are strong; the cities are fortified and very large; moreover we saw the descendants of Anak there. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the South; the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the mountains; and the Canaanites dwell by the sea and along the banks of the Jordan." Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, "Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it." But the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we." And they gave the children of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, "The land through which we have gone as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great stature. There we saw the giants (the descendants of Anak came from the giants); and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."

Of all the spies, only two, Joshua and Caleb, thought differently. Notice what Caleb said:

Numbers 13:30 Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, "Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it."

The people of the land were the same, regardless of who was looking at them. The difference in the reports was due solely to whether the spies had their eyes on God, as was the case with Joshua and Caleb, or whether they had forgotten God, which was the case with the ten others.

The same is true for leaders of the church, leaders of our families, and men who are

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training to be leaders as well. It depends on whether you are looking from God's perspective, with God behind you, or if you are looking at it from the world's perspective. If you look at a trial in the family or in the church without that perspective you are probably going to say the same things that these ten spies said, because the perspective will be totally off.

Some of the people of the land were giants and Caleb later asked to conquer some of them. But when the spies kept their eyes on God, the giants shrank to manageable proportions. The two spies were right to say, "We can certainly do it." Now later on in the story they add:

Numbers 14:6-9 But Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb the son of Jephunneh, who were among those who had spied out the land, tore their clothes; and they spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying: "The land we passed through to spy out is an exceedingly good land. If the Lord delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, 'a land which flows with milk and honey.' Only do not rebel against the Lord, nor fear the people of the land, for they are our bread; their protection has departed from them, and the Lord is with us. Do not fear them."

On the other hand, when the ten forgot God, the giants seemed overwhelming and they appeared to be grasshoppers in their own eyes. That is how fearful they were because of how they were viewing it. They were terrified all because of the negative reports given by those two spies. Then we read:

Numbers 14:10 And all the congregation said to stone them with stones. Now the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle of meeting before all the children of Israel.

Nevertheless, it was a great moment for Caleb and Joshua. These two stood for God and His promises, and they were still operating this way nearly forty years later, when they again stood at the border of the land.

Joshua learned that the majority is not always right and he learned it in a great way. It was something that you never forget, when millions of people want to stone you. He learned that disbelief is fatal. He learned that the only thing that matters in the long run is trusting and obeying God, and he obeyed and was faithful to the very end.

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The fourth important incident in Joshua's career before the events of the book of Joshua was his human commissioning to be Moses's successor. Joshua was endowed by God with the essential spiritual qualities for the office by and through His Holy Spirit. Moses, however, was to lay his hands upon him, both in order to confer formal and public appointment, and also to confirm and strengthen the spiritual gifts already bestowed through God's Spirit.

Numbers 27:18-20 And the Lord said to Moses: "Take Joshua the son of Nun with you, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him [anoint him]; set him before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and inaugurate him in their sight. And you shall give some of your authority to him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient.

Here, God Himself stated that Joshua had the Spirit of God. And because Joshua was imbued with God's Spirit, he was capable of righteously leading these people. All of us in God's church have God's Holy Spirit, so we should have a much easier time overcoming the problems of a negative leadership. God is present and ever with in us, through His Spirit, and He gives us the strength to be those leaders. God is doing the same with the ladies who are being prepared for leadership in God's Kingdom.

The history of humanity has proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that a person who is not guided and influenced with God's Spirit is miserably unqualified to lead people in the work of God. We have seen that even within the greater churches of God.

Deuteronomy 34:9 Now Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him; so the children of Israel heeded him, and did as the Lord had commanded Moses.

Remember what God said to Joshua in Joshua 1.

Joshua 1:5-6 No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.

We have that same guarantee as members of God's church.

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This commissioning would have taken place a while before the death of Moses. So there was a period in which Joshua was appointed as Moses' successor but in which he was still only second in command, somewhat like David having been anointed king although Saul was still on the throne.

This would have made for a smoother transition as Moses steadily relinquished His responsibilities. In some cases like this, a successor without God's Spirit might have behaved badly. He might put on airs: such as, "I am to be Moses' successor." Or he might try to speed up the transition: "Don't listen to Moses; he's getting old. Listen to me!"

Joshua did none of these things. He continued to conduct himself modestly and loyally until, in God's own perfect timing, the transition actually took place.

There is a godly principle that applies to years of preparation for leadership and that is that faithfulness in a few things is the condition of rule over many things; and the loyalty of a servant is the stepping stone of the royalty of the throne.

The second ingredient that is necessary for strong Christian leadership is a call to it. There is an important sense in which we are all called to God's service in a general way. We are to be disciples of Jesus Christ and do good works.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

But what I am referring to goes beyond this. It is a call to a specific work, and it gives a leader strength in the performance of that work, which he would not have if he had not received it. Joshua received this call in two ways: first, in his commissioning by Moses as recorded in Numbers 27, and second, in God's detailed charge to him immediately before the conquest.

It was because God had said to the Israelites in Joshua 1:2, "get ready to cross the Jordan river, to the land which I am giving to them, the Israelites," that Joshua declared:

Joshua 1:11 "Pass through the camp and command the people, saying, 'Prepare provisions for yourselves, for within three days you will cross over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the Lord your God is giving you to possess.'"

At the time this call came to him, Joshua was one of only two men in Israel who actually knew what lay ahead. Joshua and Caleb had entered Canaan with the original twelve spies 38 years before, so Joshua knew the strength of the enemy. He actually saw, whereas the other had not yet.

He had seen the walled cities and he had looked in awe at the giants. Humanly speaking, the majority report had been right. The people were invincible and if God were not with the Israelites in this conquest, they would have been routed and utterly destroyed.

But Joshua did not see things merely from a human point of view. He never worked out a military equation without God being the dominant factor in that equation. And when God called him, the possibility of conquering the land, which had always existed for him because with God all things are possible, now became a certainty, and he moved ahead vigorously.

Nobody is as invincible as the person who is certain God has called him or her to a responsibility. Nobody is as bold as the person who knows that God has already given him victory. He has already given us victory over Satan, sin, and the world so we can move forward with the confidence and assurance that God is with us and behind us in this.

Now the third ingredient for strong Christian leadership is an objective revelation. The Bible is not merely to be acquired as one might possess another book, just putting it on a shelf for decorative purposes or only using it as a reference. Rather, it is to be acquired internally as the words of that revelation are studied, spoken of, meditated upon, and obeyed. Nothing is as essential for success in God's service as knowing and building on the written Word of God.

By knowing Scripture, the pattern of your thinking will begin to evaluate circumstances and the advice of others as Jesus Himself would if He were in your situation. The pattern of your thinking becomes the pattern of your actions.

Titus 2:6-8 Likewise, exhort the young men to be sober-minded, in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you.

This is to be a pattern of God's way of life. It is consistent and it is continuous. Every

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young man, starting in his teens, should be trained to be leaders of future families and leaders in whatever area God may place them.

Now it seems that the specific leading of God comes, ninety-nine percent of the time, through Scripture and at best only one percent of the time through anything subjective. And even then, the subjective elements must be evaluated and corrected by Scripture.

We see an example in Joshua 1. God told Joshua that the time had come for the Israelites to possess the Promised Land. Joshua could have taken that to mean that he should come up with plans on the basis of his personal call to be the people's leader. After all he had been commissioned to lead the Israelites. But although the call was a real call, and part of Joshua's real success as a leader, Joshua nevertheless formed his plans in accordance with the written revelation of God. He followed God's instruction and he followed it carefully.

Now the fourth and final ingredient for effective Christian leadership is faith in God. It seems obvious but it is extremely important. It is needed as much today as it was in the time of Joshua.

Joshua continued faithful to God throughout the forty years wandering. Trained at Moses' side, he really was the only one of the older generation who was qualified to lead Israel. Caleb would have been the only other possible consideration.

In the first part of Joshua 1, there is a verse that is quoted in the New Testament and applied to us, and it concerns this very matter. In verse 5 God tells this great military commander Joshua:

Joshua 1:5 No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you.

The same thing is said to Israel by Moses in Deuteronomy 31:6, and this text is quoted by the author of Hebrews.

Hebrews 13:5-6 Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." [speaking to God's church] So we may boldly say: "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"

This is exactly what Joshua experienced and what he must have said to himself hundreds of times. God was for him; God had called him; He trusted God, and therefore, Joshua would lead the people into battle knowing they would be invincible as long as God continued on their side.

People follow a leader like that because, to follow him is to follow God. This is why we find the chapter closing with these words.

Joshua 1:16-18 So they answered Joshua, saying, "All that you command us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go. Just as we heeded Moses in all things, so we will heed you. Only the Lord your God be with you, as He was with Moses. Whoever rebels against your command and does not heed your words, in all that you command him, shall be put to death. Only be strong and of good courage."

The people had not fully obeyed Moses and they would not fully obey Joshua. But that did not faze Joshua, he held on and did his duty to the very end. Joshua had God's Spirit and so do we. We have that same promise, power, and presence available to us from which Joshua led.

So men, how do we apply that to our lives today? The ideal leader assumes the position as head of the family as a sacred responsibility. He takes pride in the masculine role. He does not set it aside or turn it over to others. He has a keen feeling of responsibility for his place as leader, realizing that it is one of his most important functions in life. He serves patiently, with dedication and devotion. The apostle Paul admonishes us in Titus 2.

Titus 2:2 that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience.

A man who is a leader has traits of both toughness and gentleness. There are tough qualities which accompany great leadership such as: firmness; decisive judgment; courage; steadfastness; and a keen sense of justice.

He rules over his flock with firmness, determination, and resolve. He does not allow others to dictate, to steal his leadership, to push him around or pressure him into things against his own judgment. He does not appease or make concessions. He fearlessly follows the dictates of his own biblically based convictions. But in his firmness he is

always fair.

In making decisions he is always careful. If he does not have sufficient knowledge upon which to base a wise decision, he will carefully attain that knowledge. He will seek the counsel of his family members when necessary, to get their ideas.

But once he has made a decision based upon the best of his judgment, he will have the courage of his convictions, the steadfastness to follow through. He may make mistakes, but allows for those mistakes. There is a struggle going on within every man in this way.

There is in everyone a struggle between the flesh and the Spirit. The flesh, the corrupt and carnal part of us, strives and struggles with vigor against the Spirit. The apostle Paul saw this same struggle going on in his own life and so he warns all of us to be aware of it.

Galatians 5:17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.

On the other hand, the Spirit, the renewed part of us, strives against the flesh, and opposes the will and desire of it. Because of this, our character is developed in such a way that, when we live by the Spirit of God, we cannot do the things of the world, which includes following the world's version of leadership.

The tendencies of human nature war against good leadership qualities, as we see in this world in homosexuality, the feminists, the corrupt leaders of the nations, and so on. These have a heavy and complete influence on the world.

Romans 7:15 For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.

Romans 7:18-19 For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.

As the Spirit of righteousness in us will not allow us to do all the wrong things that our corrupt nature wants to do, so neither can we do all the good that we want to do

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because of the oppositions we meet from our own human nature. There is a constant warring within ourselves between these two. But the Spirit overcomes the flesh and we should be making good progress which we see in the fruit of the Spirit that is produced.

In a renewed man, where there is good character, there is a struggle between the old nature and the new nature, the remainders of sin and the beginnings of righteousness. It is our duty and in our best interest in this struggle to follow God's will, to follow our God-given convictions based on knowledge, faithfulness, and truth as we overcome our weaknesses. This is our duty as Christian leaders in our homes and in God's church.

The leader has the confidence that his judgment is sound because of his conviction to God's way of life. Because he has confidence in himself based on his close relationship with God, others believe in him and follow him readily.

The ideal leader will also have gentle qualities. He has a kindly consideration for those he is leading; a tender-heartedness for the needs of others; unselfishness and a willingness to sacrifice his own pleasures for members of his family. Any leader must be unselfish and considerate if he is to be great.

But along with his gentle tenderness, a great leader must be firm and unyielding at times. He must have the toughness of steel in following through on what he considers a right decision, even if it means bitter disappointment to those he is leading. This unalterable courage of his convictions is the quality of leadership that brings order to a household.

A great leader has humility. It is what governs his "tough side." He is not too proud to listen to the counsel of his family members and, in fact, seeks their opinions. If one of them is right and he is wrong, he is humble enough to admit it. He realizes that, being human, he has limitations, and that others may contribute immeasurably to his leadership role, especially his wife, as his confidant, associate, and companion. She is an invaluable helper comparable to him, his spiritual equal.

Now with this combination of qualities, the tough traits of steadfastness, courage, and justice; and the gentle traits of tenderness, consideration, and humility, a man is equipped to offer excellent leadership to his family, to bring order and peace to his household. This is the perfect situation in which to establish an ideal home and rear well-adjusted, and happy children.

Sadly, this is not what we see in the world. We should reject the pattern for the family that we see in the world because it is wrong. Our families should not reflect the world's

families.

A young man should begin working to develop these qualities in his teens. He who waits until he gets married before starting to develop these qualities is ill-equipped for marriage and unprepared for leadership of a family. Remember the statistics that I gave at the beginning of the sermon here, the average is now 45 years old before they are prepared for marriage.

Please turn to I John. Notice what the apostle John says about how these qualities are to carry over into one's responsibility to the church. Here, he is speaking to the spiritual children, fathers and young men of the church. Figuratively, he is referring to both male and female members here.

I John 2:12-14 I write to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake. I write to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, because you have known the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one.

At first glance we may wonder what he is getting at here, but John's two statements to the spiritually mature of his congregations, the fathers, are identical. They are also quite similar to the second of his statements to children. There is one difference, however, and in this difference lies the distinct nature of John's reference here.

John says to the children that he has written to them because they have "known the Father." And he says to the fathers that he is writing to them because they have "known Him who is from the beginning." Obviously the new element is the reference to time, "from the beginning," and this suggests the idea of God's unchanging faithfulness together with the spiritual trust and wisdom that such knowledge brings over time.

It is the fathers, the long-time members who, as the result of a lifetime of spiritual experience, have known the Eternal and have come fully to trust Him. John writes to these because, having known God in this way, they will be able to rejoice in the truths that the apostle John teaches and support what he writes. "The fathers" must give credibility to the Scriptures by the way they live; by their witness of God's way of life. Being mature members of God's church, this is where we all should be.

John's lengthiest comments are reserved for the young men, and it is easy to see why this is so. These are the ones most energetically engaged in the duty of Christian living and who are expected to be the church's first line of defense in the face of attacks.

In view of the threat that prompted John to write the letter, it is safe to say that the young men are to be the major opponents of heresies such as the Gnosticism that plagued the church in the 1st century, and does to this day in the form of humanism.

Why is this so? Because these are the members, both male and female, who are leading and teaching their children to live God's way of life. They have the greatest impact on the future members of the church. They have a great responsibility because they are in their own homes and they are personally responsible. The men and women are both personally responsible, but the father's especially, are given a commission to lead.

John says three things about these young men. First, he says they are strong. This is the natural virtue of young manhood, but we might have expected John to encourage them to be strong rather than simply stating that they are. However, this is not John's approach here. Instead, his aim is to assure them of the spiritual strength they have already attained and of the fact that under God they are able to meet Satan's attacks and warn their families, their children, and other members of the church about them.

It is interesting to note at this point that the verbs in these six statements, except for the word "are," are in the perfect tense, indicating a continuing result of past action. They did not just start doing this, they have been doing it and they continue to do it. In other words, John is emphasizing the assured standing into which every Christian has come, whatever his time of spiritual development has been.

Secondly, John explains why the young men are strong. It is not that they are strong in themselves. He is speaking spiritually now and not physically, and no one is spiritually strong by himself. Rather it is that God has, Himself, made them strong through His Spirit and His Word that is abiding in them.

These men, these church members, have understood the gospel, God's truth. They have assimilated its demands, including obedience to God and the need to love the brethren, and they are using their knowledge. It is possible that John is thinking of Psalm 119 where it says:

Psalm 119:9 How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word.

Third, John tells of the results that come from the fact that the young men have been strong. That is, they have overcome the wicked one. This is John's point of emphasis, because the words are repeated twice in verses 13-14, in each case in the last and emphatic position, meaning that you already have victory. This is what is called for. You are given God's Holy Spirit which guarantees you victory over Satan, the world, and sin.

Consequently, we must learn that the forgiveness of sins and the knowledge of God which we have enjoyed from the initial moments of our conversion are not the sum total of God's way of life. Rather, we must seek to grow spiritually strong so that we may take our proper and needed place in the spiritual warfare against Satan, sin, and the world, and also to take our proper place in God's Kingdom.

Since men were born with the sacred responsibility to create a family and appointed to be their leader, they were also born with the capability to lead. It is a spiritual truth, that the Lord God gives no commandment to His people without also giving them the means to carry it out.

We men have been given the capability of carrying out leadership in our families and wherever else God may call us into. Therefore, since God blessed the man with the leadership of the family, He also blessed him with the capacity to lead. We see this vividly throughout Joshua's life and the great leadership he performed.

One important message of the book of Joshua is that true and false religions do not mix. Joshua's orders were to destroy the Canaanites because of their pagan and immoral worship practices. As Joshua had to stand and fight against the paganism of the world, the leaders today of our families and of God's church have to watch out for the world's worldview and the danger it poses to the families of God's church.

These people of the other nations never were totally subdued or destroyed during Joshua's time. Traces of their false religion remained to tempt the Israelites. Again and again throughout their history, the children of Israel departed from worship of the one true God, and in doing so men gave up any effort to rightly lead their families and nation.

This tendency toward false worship was the main reason for Joshua's moving farewell speech. He warned the people against worshipping these false gods and challenged them to remain faithful to the Lord their God who delivered them.

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As the leader of the nation, the point of Joshua's message was this: "You cannot worship these false gods and remain faithful to the Lord." Put in another way, for us today, "You cannot be of the world and lead people to live God's way of life."

Joshua 24:14-15 "Now therefore, fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord! And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River [or you could say that are in the world today], or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

In our case, in this present society, our duty as Christian men, especially as husbands and fathers, is to do everything we can to guide our families, especially our children, in the direction of God's way of life by teaching and upholding God's standards in our homes and in God's church.

During Joshua's time he was concerned about the Israelites' tendency to follow the pagan practices of the surrounding nations. Today, as leaders of our families we are concerned about our family members' tendency to be enticed by the world's education, entertainment, and generally by its perverse influence and twisted mindset.

Specifically, we must be concerned about immoral music and the gods and goddesses of this pop-culture, the "idols" who call themselves actors, musicians, and singers. The young and old alike tend to want to be like them and so they begin to think like them and even identify with them because they spend all their time obsessed with them.

So men must lead their families in the right direction. A man has the physical, emotional, and temperamental make-up to lead, but he must do it with a balance of toughness and gentleness.

If a man finds that he is lacking in any of these qualities, it may be due to the background of his childhood. Growing up under the leadership of a weak father or a dominating mother may have caused a lack of development. These traits may be recessive in him and therefore appear nonexistent.

If for any reason you feel that you do not measure up in your role as the leader, you can rest assured that you do possess the innate qualities to lead. You need only to turn to God for a realization of these virtues.

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If you will exercise faith and confidence in God, and will seek His assistance in your problems, you will grow to succeed courageously as a leader and in leadership.

Are you living up to that potential? How well are you upholding the eternal standard of God's way of life in your life and in your family's life? God made a leader in each and every one of you men so lead on!

May God grant us all the qualities necessary to become great leaders in the Kingdom.